DEFENCE POLICY.

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3.38 p.m.

The LORD PRESIDENT of the COUNCIL (Mr. Baldwin) When this Debate was originally fixed for this day we had expected that the impending speech of Herr Hitler would have been delivered in such time that we could have given it mature consideration in all parts of the House before the Debate actually took place, but when the lamented death of Marshal Pilsudski occurred—and I would wish to express to the Polish Government and people the sympathy of us all in that loss—it was announced that the funeral arrangements involved a postponement of Herr Hitler's speech, and consequently it was only delivered last night. Nevertheless, it would be quite impossible for me not to take this, the earliest, opportunity of referring to this striking declaration. It is very elaborate and it will receive the fullest and fairest consideration from His Majesty's Government. The House must remember that on the 2nd May the statements made by the Prime Minister and by the Foreign Secretary in the Debate included an appeal to Germany to make a contribution in concrete and specific terms towards a solution of the difficulties and dangers, both to security and confidence, which are overshadowing the world, and which can only be removed by collective agreements. It is manifest that the German Chancellor's speech last night is, among other things, an answer to that appeal. We recognise it as such, and we recognise that Herr Hitler has made more precise the German attitude in several directions of the greatest importance and has indicated in a number of respects what Germany is prepared to do.

We regard these declarations as of very serious consequence. They deserve serious and prompt study from us all, and I have said that His Majesty's Government will at once devote to them the very closest attention in a spirit of sympathy and candour. Whatever maybe said of past events, which, after all, will be judged by history—for, over the past, not even the gods havepower—the present situation and future developments largely depend upon human wisdom and human courage, and on what is done now. They will not depend only on what this country does or says; but we have a very important part to play in co-operation with others, and we will not fail to do our utmost to bring about, in every direction that is possible, international agreement.

There is one respect in which Herr Hitler's speech has a direct bearing upon the special topic of to-day's Debate. The Chancellor declared that Germany intended to limit the German air force to parity with the other individual Western Powers. As will appear from the later part of my speech, this is a confirmation of the basis upon which our air plans are being founded. The Chancellor went on to point out that upon a ratio of parity, as distinguished from aiming at a particular arithmetical total without regard to what others do, it was possible, by agreement between the Powers specially concerned, not only to fix but to reduce the limit. That is a very important reflection, and it was one which we have had in mind throughout.

I must also call the special attention of the Committee to the German Chancellor's reference to the proposed air pact between the Locarno Powers. Herr Hitler stated that the German Government were, ready to discuss and to agree to an air convention supplementary to the Locarno Pact Ever since the London Declaration of 3rd February, when the idea of such a pact was formulated jointly by British and French Ministers, His Majesty's Government have made the promotion of this Pact by negotiation between the Powers interested, one of the object of their most earnest endeavour. The Committee may remember that the London Declaration recorded the resolve of British and French Ministers to invite Italy, Germany, and Belgium to consider with them whether such a convention might not be promptly negotiated. We have, in fact, been in communication with all those Governments. When my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary paid his visit to Berlin, this was one of the matters he then discussed with the German Chancellor, and what Herr Hitler has now said is the more valuable, because it indicates his hope that the negotiation of such an air pact might be accompanied by agreed limitation. I would remind the Committee that in the Debate in this House on 2nd May, the Prime Minister, in the course of his speech, used these words: “I wonder if I might interpolate, with no idea whatever of exceeding the intentions of the three Powers represented at Stresa, the thought that in connection with the further consideration of this Pact we might come to an agreement as regard air strengths."—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 2nd May, 1935; col. 576, Vol.301.]” I look upon that last sentence as a confirmation that that hope, put forward by our Prime Minister on 2nd May, has received a reply which, I think, shows to us that that hope has now some foundation, and that, by common effort of the countries concerned, some result may be attained.

There is one other matter to which His Majesty's Government attach the greatest importance. It seemed to us that the promotion of an air pact might be combined with an effort to safeguard the civil population against the danger of indiscriminate attacks from the air. There are passages in Herr Hitler's speech which seem to indicate that he shares that view. These are very important considerations, which cannot be omitted from an air debate. We welcome Herr Hitler's contribution in the matter as helping to that general settlement which was the object of the London Declaration.

I will not refer to-day to other portions of his statement in which, for example, he defines the contribution which Germany

would be prepared to make towards a greater sense of security in Eastern Europe; that is because that subject, however important, has no direct bearing upon the topics which are of more immediate interest to us in the Debate in this Committee to-day.

Now I will, with the permission of the Committee, proceed to give some account of the Government's proposals, and of the work which the Government have performed in the examination of the defence situation, and though the subject matter of the first few minutes in which I propose to address the Committee is familiar to many hon. Members and is a topic on which I have spoken before in this House, it is essential I think for hon. Members to have it fresh in their minds to-day, in the case of those who may wish to discuss the very important subject of the co-ordination of the Defence Services. I shall not be long before I shall come straight to the subject which I know is of the greatest interest to the Committee to-day. I would only say this: I have to speak this afternoon in very general terms, for I have much ground to cover, and there are many things I wish to say. Doubtless during the Debate many points of detail will arise, and my right hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Air will speak to-night and will answer, so far as is consonant with the public interest, all the points, technical and detailed, which may be raised in the course of the Debate.

It will be familiar to the Committee that the Government recently introduced and explained certain plans for the strengthening of the national defences, and the way in which the Government have proceeded, if I may once more sketch it briefly, will show clearly how far the technical co-ordination, or perhaps I should rather say the co-ordination in technical matters between the Services, has progressed in the last decade. It will be familiar to all those who have been Members of the Government, and possibly to many others in the House, that the Chiefs of Staffs, in addition to their day-to-day duties, submit every year a report on the condition of the national defences. When they came to make their annual review of the preceding year in October, 1933, they had to make that review in the light of information from the Foreign Office that there had been a marked deterioration in the preceding 12 months in the international situation, and that marked Deterioration had coincided with a considerable amount of re-armament on the part of many countries throughout the world—rearmament that could not fail to cause all lovers of peace considerable anxiety.

It was in that light than the report was prepared, and the report showed, as everyone knows it would in these circumstances, the serious condition of the accumulated deficiencies—deficiencies that had accumulated during years when it was not only the policy of successive Governments to refrain from fresh commitments in armaments, but it was also a policy that was endorsed by the people of this country at large, who were all of them prepared at that time and in those circumstances to make a real sacrifice of a feeling of unimpaired security in the hope that they might get that disarmament which all our people, and, indeed,

many people throughout the world, hoped they might have. This report was considered, on presentation, by the Committee of Imperial Defence, and, on the advice of that committee, the Government decided to ascertain the facts in detail. A small official sub-committee was set up, consisting of the three Chiefs of Staffs, representatives of the Treasury and of the Foreign Office, and the Permanent Secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence.

Their work, of course, was a work of great detail and of great length, and it was, not unnaturally, discovered, as they approached the close of it, that other considerations had to be reckoned with and accounted for—financial considerations, foreign considerations, and considerations concerned with the disarmament policy of the Government. And so the report prepared by that sub-committee to which I have just alluded was then handed over to a Ministerial Committee, which had existed for some years for the purpose of dealing with disarmament. That Committee was presided over by the Prime Minister, and, subject to two exceptions, it was composed entirely of Ministerial members of the Committee of Imperial Defence. Some of its members had been chairmen of sub-committees of the Committee of Imperial Defence. It was to all effects the Committee of Imperial Defence itself. The technical advisers were the same, the secretary was the same, and most of the members were the same.

To their work that committee gave something like three months of very close and arduous labour, presided over, as I have said by the Prime Minister until he went to Canada last summer, and for the last month presided over by myself. After reporting to the Cabinet at the end of those months of work, the Committee still remained in session to advise on adjustments that might be needed to meet the changing conditions. That Committee is still functioning now, and has been engaged in very close and protracted examination of the very scheme which I purpose putting before the House today. I think it will be seen from that, and I think those who have had experience will acknowledge, that, so far as the technical side is concerned, the system of co-ordination in the Committee of Imperial Defence is satisfactory.

There is a further question, and one which I understand may be discussed today. That is the question of whether the appointment of a Minister solely responsible for the co-ordination of defence policy would be of service, and the idea may be put forward expressed in different terms. The idea of some such co-ordination is no new one, but it is one which many of us have been considering carefully a new. I have no decision to announce on it to-day. It is one of the many matters that are under consideration. But I can assure the House that I and my colleagues and the Government will listen with great interest, and with a desire to obtain the help of the Committee, to any suggestions on this subject which may be made.

I would like now to make this observation, which I may repeat in the course of my speech. I hope that the Committee, as the

country, in their discussions to-day, and even in their private thoughts, will avoid all spirit of panic. I would ask them to remember that after nearly every war the defence forces of this country, certainly for the last century and a half, have been neglected, and the result of that neglect has been that this country has not infrequently found itself involved in war unprepared; and it has had to pay for that want of preparation by millions in money and by what is far worse—by our best lives having to be sacrificed. The South Coast is dotted all over with visible and tangible results of panics, from the Napoleonic days till 50 years ago. I was staying this week-end within 20 miles of London, and quite close to the house in which I was staying may still be seen in the Surrey Hills—or the Kent Hills, I forget which, but it is the same thing for the purpose of my argument—works devised barely 50 years ago in a moment of panic; And so I say, for every reason let us avoid panic, and let us also avoid that neglect which inevitably, in process of time, leads to that very panic time after time. Let us not repeat those mistakes of the past.

I would like to put this to the Committee. I have out lined the circumstances in which this measure of re-equipment, as it has been called, which was foreshadowed many, many months ago, and which is being brought directly to the notice of the House in the various Service Estimates—delayed so long in the hope of some general limitation—has been decided upon. It was decided upon as an act of national defence which no responsible Government in this country, in possession of the knowledge which the Government must have, could leave undone, but which is even more than a question of national defence. It is a question of the ability of this country to fulfil its obligations under the Covenant. It is a platitude to say that the abiding interest of this country is peace. You have only to look at the map of the world to see that there is no single corner of it in which this country can benefit by upheaval. The world is not static, as we know, and changes are bound to occur in the process of time, but who, in the light of the experiences of 20 years ago dare to let loose machines of destruction by land, on the sea and in the air for selfish reasons of their own? The Kellogg Pact forbids it, and the whole spirit of the Covenant of the League of Nations forbids it, and it is inconceivable that the democratic Government of this country would ever use its strength, even if it had ten times the strength it has to-day, in a war of aggression.

Therefore, I say that when this House supports the Government at the present time, it is reinforcing not only national security but collective security, because we all know that our armaments will only be used in restraint of an aggressor. It is my earnest hope that they will never have to be so used, but if collective security were in danger it would be little comfort to the innocent party to know that it had our good will. I believe that all peace-loving peoples in these last anxious days have been disheartened by the extent to which we—and we are the friends of all peaceful people—have allowed ourselves to fall short in our ability to fulfil our obligations, and I believe the knowledge that we can do so will give great encouragement to those who desire to live in peace, and will be a deterrent to any who might—I do not say now; I am no scaremonger—but at some future

time of stress, be tempted to forget or disregard their solemn undertakings, whether under the Covenant or under the Kellogg Pact. If I might take a little text, which sometimes like to do in a speech to hang my arguments and statements upon, I would like to take one sentence written by a very great man familiar to many Members—and, I am quite sure, my right hon. Friend the Member for Epping (Mr. Churchill) will recognise it and know where it comes from—George Savile, Marquis of Halifax. He wrote more than 200 years ago: "It may be said now to England, What shall we do to be saved in this world? There is no other answer but this: Look to your moat." And when Savile wrote it was only the thing that floated on the surface of the moat. To-day it is what goes underneath the moat, and what goes above the moat. Nevertheless, for that security of our land, and for all that we hold dear, it is the moat with its surface, and underneath and in the sky, to which our people and our Governments must look to keep their own security.

I should like, in a few words, to contrast the position of a democracy such as ours and the authoritarian State in regard to their security. If an authoritarian State—I think there are three of them in Europe—wishes swiftly, and in large measure, to increase its national defences, it can do it in absolute secrecy. It can draw a curtain round all that is happening in the country; nothing appears in the Press, no word is said in public and nothing is said in Parliament, and the world is presented with a fait accompli. But the Committee may remember that in a speech of mine a year or two ago I said that one of the gravest causes of apprehension and fear was the ignorance of the world as to what was going on behind some of these screens. Ignorance begets rumour. The veil has been partially lifted in Germany. I hope and believe it will be fully lifted soon, that we may be perfectly frank with each other as to all we have in the way of armaments, because, until that has been done, there can be no real confidence. The partial raising of the veil is quite as dangerous as the full veil, if not more so. People see some corner of something, and the rumours are bound to be wilder and wilder until the real truth is known.

I have said these things before. I warned the House about them when I spoke last November. On that subject I would say two things. First of all, with regard to the figure I then gave of German aeroplanes, nothing has come to my knowledge since that makes me think that that figure was wrong. I believed at that time it was right. Where I was wrong was in my estimate of the future. There I was completely wrong. I tell the House so frankly, because neither I nor any advisers from whom we could get accurate information had any idea of the exact rate at which production was being, could be, and actually was being speeded up in Germany in the six months between November and now. We were completely misled on that subject. I will not say we had not rumours. There was a great deal of hearsay, but we could get no facts, and the only facts at this moment that I could put before the House, and the only facts that I have, are those which I have from Herr Hitler himself, and until I have reason to doubt them, which I have not at present, I put those figures before the House. I am not sure whether both of them have not been given to the House, but certainly one has; it was mentioned in the interview between the Foreign Secretary and Herr

Hitler when Herr Hitler told the Foreign Secretary he had achieved parity with this country in the air, or words to that effect. Subsequent examination in Berlin revealed the fact from those authorised to speak for him that he had at that time from 800 to 850 first-line aircraft. In the course of those conversations Herr Hitler made it clear that his goal was parity with France. Now we are basing our estimates on that strength. It is always difficult to know what parity is, or from what angle it is envisaged. We have to make a certain amount of guess-work there, and for our purpose, for the parity of the three nations, we have taken a figure round about 1,500 first-line aircraft. That is very much the figure that is given in the League of Nations annual review I think—I forget the name, but hon. Members will be familiar with it—and if you take the figures, and make a deduction for aircraft in the Far East, you will get somewhere round about that figure of 1,500. And that is the figure at which we are aiming, and to which we intend to proceed with all the speed that we can.

Sir AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN I do not quite understand how my right hon. Friend gets the figure of 1,500. Is that what, he imagines the French have?

Mr. BALDWIN Yes—first-line aircraft, excluding what they may have in the Far East. There must be in these figures a certain amount of conjecture, and I have always explained in every Debate of this kind, whenever proposals have been made for increases, that our programmes are always flexible to this extent, that they can either be accelerated or decelerated—increased orreduced—according as the situation warrants.

That is where we stand for the moment. But I think the House ought to bear this in mind, that in all considerations of aircraft strength, there are a number of things to be considered beside numbers alone. There are questions of reserves, questions of training, questions of morale, and in all those respects I submit that we occupy a very strong position, and when people are a little apt sometimes, for oratorical effect it may be, rather to under-rate our strength in this country, it is well to remember the points which may be put in our favour, that are to our advantage in a Debate of this nature. Everything now requisite for this expansion is under consideration, and will be put in hand immediately. I would make this observation about the size of the forces. I feel myself—I always have felt, and I am sure a great many Members of this House who have studied the question would agree with me—that some parity in numbers is an almost necessary step to make easier the two things that we most desire; that is, some form of collective security like the proposed air pact of the Locarno Powers, and some method of limitation. Both are far easier to obtain Wall parties start from more or less the same point. If one country is running away from another in strength, if one country is falling far behind, it is far more difficult to bring the two together on any agreement. I think that the general common sense of the House would be with me in that, and I think that very likely something of the kind was in Herr Hitler's mind when he said last night that the German Government in this way “have done their best to show their desire to

avoid any unrestricted world armament race. Their limitation of the air arm to a degree of parity with the other individual Western great Powers makes possible at any time the fixing of a maximum which Germany then undertakes to observe." It has very often been the case in naval disarmament too that the prelude to successful agreements as to limitations has been either something approaching an equality, or a recognition that there will be an equality and possibly a race in armaments if the limitation be not effective.

Now a word as to production. To my mind by far the most disquieting feature of an increase of armaments is an increase to anything like what I may call a war basis in the production of munitions. It is a. very subtle and difficult thing to deal with any limitation, and unless there can be control it makes limitation much less effective. Unless, again, other countries who are limiting their forces have alike the power to control production, there is left a tremendous power lying in the immediate background for the one country, if it be only one, that has these advantages. In modern warfare there is nothing, as everybody knows, more important than the organisation of the industry behind the machines. Therefore, I do feet on every ground—I do not say in this matter that one thing is more important than another, but I do say that there is nothing more important whatever the future may hold—that we should now direct our minds most seriously to remedying that weakness in our defence, that, should, which God forbid, the occasion arise for the rapid production of these machines, this country, with her technical skill and her knowledge, shall be in no way behind as compared with any other country in the world. But I want to say a word or two about this. It is perfectly obvious that even in bringing up the force to the figures that I have mentioned a great deal of work lies ahead. I do not believe that we are second to any country in what our industries can do.

There are two things on which I am certainly determined, and the whole Government are determined—that, in the efforts which we regard as necessary for the nation during the next couple of years, say, there shall be no profiteering in a time that I might almost call a time of emergency. There will be a great demand for certain types of labour. There will be great demands for the production of factories, and I hope that none of the interested parties will try to make capital out of the situation. We are already in consultation as to how the industries for this purpose should be organised with Lord Weir, than whom, in times of national emergency, no one in the country has more knowledge. As we have more information to give and more knowledge we shall be glad to give it. At the moment we can only say that this whole question of organisation will be most carefully examined by the Air Ministry and by those most able from outside to give advice, and we shall not hesitate later on to report the progress that may be made. I would repeat here, and I may repeat it a third time, that there is no occasion, in my view, in what we are doing for panic, but I will say this deliberately, with all the knowledge I have of the situation, that I would not remain for one moment in any Government which took less determined steps than we are taking to-day.

There will, of course, be a Supplementary Estimate subsequently on which many matters of detail may be examined. I would only like to say, in concluding this part of my speech, and I think that it is only due to say it, that there has been a great deal of criticism, both in the Press and verbally, about the Air Ministry as though they were responsible for possibly an inadequate programme, for not having gone ahead faster, and for many Other things. I only want to repeat that whatever responsibility there may be and we are perfectly ready to meet criticism—that responsibility is not that of any single Ministry; it is the responsibility of the Government as a whole, and we are all responsible and we are all to blame.

I had a peroration—I am not an orator, but I think that it was not a bad one—but it has been torn up because it was impossible to deliver it after the speech which was delivered in Berlin last night. I propose to end on a different note. I want, if I may, to address a few words to the Opposition. I know perfectly well how many Members of this House, who perhaps have put peace before all things, must be feeling at this time in seeing what the Government believe to be the right thing to do in these circumstances. It gives me an opportunity, moreover, of saying something that I hope they will forgive me for saying, but which I have wanted to say for some time, and it is this. Whatever may be said of this Parliament in years to come and whatever may be said of the right hon. Gentleman's party, I believe that full tribute will be given to him and to his friends. As I and those on these benches who take part in the daily work of the House so well know, the Labour party as a whole have helped to keep the flag of Parliamentary government flying in the world through the difficult periods through which we have passed. They were nearly wiped out at the polls. Coming back with 50 Members, with hardly a man among them with experience of government, many would have thrown their hands in. But from the first day the right hon. Gentleman led his party in this House, they have taken their part as His Majesty's Opposition—and none but those who have been through the mill in opposition know what the day-to-day work is—with no Civil Service behind them, they have equipped themselves for debate after debate and held their own and put their case. I want to say that partly because I think it is due, and partly because I know that they, as I do, stand in their heart of hearts for our Constitution and for our free Parliament, and that has been preserved in the world against all difficulties and against all dangers. I would say this to them, and then I shall have finished. I believe from my heart that if hon. Members had been in my place sitting on these benches governing the country, responsible for the safety of their people, knowing what we know, faced with the facts with which we are faced, they could not have come to any different conclusion from the one to which we have come and which we are putting before the House to-day.

I have but a word or two more to say. I have often, in speaking in this House, said that the greatest danger in the world is the fear from which all nations are suffering, and the reason that I come back again and again, in good times and in bad, to the subject of aerial limitation or abolition or the abolition of armaments is not because I do not want to see limitation in every direction, not that we will cease to struggle to get that limitation in every direction, but because by far the most important for

the peace of mind of the people in Europe is the air. Just think for one moment. So long as the people of Europe and their Governments are always looking over their shoulders expecting an attack now here and now there, horrifying themselves and each other with the possibilities of air raiding—so long as that is the case the minds of statesmen and the minds of the people are taken right away from what really matters so much to-day, and that is dealing with the internal conditions of their own countries. There is not a country in Europe that has not got its own internal problems. We have ours, but Germany has got hers, France has hers, Russia has hers, and Italy has hers. They have all got it, and it may be that in some way at the moment, even with the numbers of unemployed that we have we are more happily situated than many other countries. So long as that frame of mind and that fear exists, the nations cannot really settle down to those things that matter and look after their own business and their own trade. It is by the gradual rehabilitation of trade in Europe that peace will come to the nations. Look at the temptation to-day in countries with millions of unemployed to put their unemployed into the manufacture of armaments, and how much more difficult it is for such countries to take them out of the manufacture of armaments until things settle down a little bit and they can see that they can get more work in civil occupations. These things form a vicious circle that is going to be mighty hard for the nations to break. If we do not recognise where the vicious circle is and where it wants breaking, we shall never succeed in breaking it. If we can get rid of that fear in Europe, we may hope then to have some progress and drive this perpetual terror from the minds of men.

I have been occupied myself in studying questions of aid raid precautions, and I tell the House that I have been made almost physically sick to think that I and my friends and the statesmen in every country in Europe, 2,000years after our Lord was crucified, should be spending our time thinking how we can get the mangled bodies of children to the hospitals and how we can keep the poison gas from going down the throats of the people. It is time that all Europe recognised this. I look for light wherever I can find it. I believe there is some light in the speech that was made last night. We must all get hold of more light; all our friends who work with us. We must make a fresh resolve, and I believe that an opportunity may be open even now at the eleventh hour, knowing that the night is ever darkest before the dawn, when in a time measurable in our lives we may see banished from the world the most fearful terror and prostitution of man's knowledge that ever was known in the world.

4.33 p.m.

Mr. ATTLEE I beg tomove to reduce the Vote by £100.

I should like to thank the right hon. Gentleman for the kind words that he said of the work of the Opposition in this Parliament. particularly welcome what he said as regards my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, because it is to him that the

credit, whatever credit there be, is mainly due. We feel that it is our duty to preserve our democratic Constitution and the workings of this Parliament. I equally want to say that we are concerned with the safety and defence of this country. The right hon. Gentleman has made a speech to us to-day full of very grave import. He made us a speech of very grave import in 1932. In 1932 he developed with tremendous power the danger from which the world suffers in regard to air warfare. To-day he has been developing the Government's proposals for defence; but there is a great hiatus between those two speeches, because the proposals for defence are not related in any way to the menace. They do not in the slightest degree counter the dangers which he put forward. I propose to deal with the question of air defence a little later.

I want, first, to say a few words with regard to the speech which was made by the German Chancellor. We on this side have never defended Germany's rearmament. We have recognised all along the danger of breaches of Treaties, and we have had to-day a speech wherein certain statements are made and certain proposals suggested which give ground for hope, the ground for the possibility of reopening the whole question of disarmament. Herr Hitler has said that he is ready to take part in a system of collective co-operation. He has said that he would conclude pacts of non-aggression, that he was prepared to set fixed limits on armaments, and that he proposes restriction of bombing. He also proposes restriction of tanks, artillery and submarines. These are all matters that have been discussed and should be discussed again. We think that forthwith the Disarmament Conference should meet to consider these proposals.

I am not suggesting that the whole of the speech made by the German Chancellor was satisfactory. I think it contained very great dangers. There were reservations with regard to the East, and with regard to Lithuania. There were references to the German peoples and to Soviet Russia. Herr Hitler said that there was a gulf between 'Germany and Russia that could not be bridged. Germany, Russia and ourselves have to live in one world, and, if we are to live, that gulf has to be bridged. We want a response to these statements. We see here a chance to call a, halt in the armaments race. We should like immediately to get a standstill order in the race which is starting. It is no good saying that it is not a race because there is a limit. There is generally a, limit in a race, it may be 100 yards or a mile, but it does not alter the fact that it is a race. We want to see a, standsill order. We want to see, because this matter is urgent, the whole question discussed and a new conference called at once. We should like to see international supervision of armaments meanwhile put into operation. We do not think that our answer to Herr Hitler should be just rearmament. We are in an age of rearmaments, but we on this side cannot accept that position.

This is not meant to be a, foreign policy Debate, but a discussion of the problems of defence. I have no desire to divert the Debate into foreign politics, but I want to state quite clearly our point of view, because defence depends on foreign policy. We have to deal with a situation which is not of our making. In our view foreign affairs have been badly mishandled during the past

four years and opportunities have been lost, but I am not discussing them today. We are not responsible, but we have to face the position as it is. I want to recall to the House what our position is as a party on the question of defence. As a party, we do not stand' for unilateral disarmament. There are members of our party for whom we have the greatest respect and whose entire sincerity we recognise who do take that line, but as a party we do not stand for unilateral disarmament. We stand for collective security through the League of Nations. We reject the use of force as an instrument of policy. We stand for the reduction of armaments and pooled security. In our programme, which was adopted at the Southport Conference, we said: "We recognise that there may be circumstances in which the Government of Great Britain might have to use its military and naval forces in support of the League in restraining an aggressor nation which declined to submit to the authority of the League." We have stated that this country must be prepared to make its contribution to collective security. The policy of collective security has evoked remarkable support throughout the country. The peace ballot is evidence of that. Our policy is not one of seeking security through rearmament but through disarmament. Our aim is the reduction of armaments and then the complete abolition of all national armaments, and the creation of an international police force under the League.

The Government are asking the country for a large increase in its armaments, and it claims that this is necessary for our security, and on that the House must express an opinion. We have to express the opinion whether the proposed increases are justified and whether they will provide increased security. I do not say absolute security but increased security. We have to say whether our armaments are correctly apportioned between the three arms, whether those arms are suitable for the purpose of the contribution we have to make, and whether the co-ordination of the defence forces is satisfactory. The difficulty that we are in is that the Government speak with two voices in striving to justify increased armaments. On the one hand, and we have had it again this afternoon, they say: "These increases are necessary in order to fulfil our obligations under the collective system, the Covenant, Locarno and so forth." That point of view was admirably expressed by the Lord Privy Seal in a speech that he made at Fulham on the 17th of this month. He rejected the policy of isolation and said: "If isolation was of no avail, neither was a system of separate and selective alliances as a permanent solution of our difficulties. An equal adjustment of force, however well devised, might be a palliative but it could not be a cure. What then remains? One solution only: a collective peace system …. In Western Europe, where we were most intimately concerned, no system of collective security could be adequate to prevent war without our wholehearted co-operation and without the provision of adequate force by us …. In the last resort the authority of a collective system must flow from the overwhelming potential force it was able to array against any would-be aggressor …. We should always be found arrayed on the side of the collective system against any government or people who sought by a return to power polities to break up the peace which by that system we were seeking to create." That is the authentic voice of authority on collective security, but there is another voice which demands armament increases as necessary

for our national defence. The White Paper on Defence spoke an entirely different language. It talked of our naval defence as something quite apart from any collective system whatever; and the right hon. Gentleman this afternoon has spoken of our moat. That conception is quite out of date to-day, but it prolongs the system of national individual defence. It talked of measuring our strength against this and that country. The White Paper justified increases in the Navy by reference to the United States, and increases in our Air Force by reference to the air forces of Russia, Japan and the United States. All that is old fashioned talk and right outside the collective system. We have had statements that we cannot accept inferiority to Germany in the air. In fact, the White Paper was a jumble of inconsistencies in the air. If we are to have a proper consideration of the needs of our defence forces it is essential that we should have absolute clarity on the point. We must have some measuring rod to tell the right amount of forces we should have. You can argue that we must have an increase in the Air Force of a certain amount in order that we may make a contribution to a force which is to deal with a possible aggressor, and you can have quite a different conception, that we must have a force which is going to defend this country and acting by itself is sufficient or greater than another force. That is a separate order of ideas altogether. If, again, we think in terms of the Navy or the Army it must be a question whether we are to stand by ourselves or in a system of collective security. We say that we should stand by the system of collective security and that within that system you cannot have each State the judge of what its contribution should be.

It seems to me that the Government often speak of the League of Nations as if it were a kind of arena for the politics of the balance of power. If the Government wish to persuade the people of this country that increased armaments are necessary, they must tell us frankly on what the calculation is based. I ask the Government: Are these increases in armaments for which they are asking a contribution to the collective system? The right hon. Gentleman has again spoken with two voices; one spoke of the collective system and the other of national defence. The two things are really incompatible. I ask on what factors are the increases based? The right hon. Gentleman told us, perhaps with a rather English complacency, that any increases in our armed forces was accepted by other countries as being non-aggressive. The same thing is said by other countries. You can put the same thought in Herr Hitler's speech. Are these increases the result of any consultations at all with our partners in the various undertakings we have made with them, with our Colonies and other members of the League of Nations, and the other Locarno Powers? Unless we get that we are merely being the judges in our own case as to what our armaments should be.

The fact which dominates the whole of this Debate and makes it different from previous discussions on defence is the fact of German rearmament. You have there a country at present a non-League Power, with a rapidly growing strength, a country which has thrown over her Treaty obligations. Unless such a country can be brought into the comity of nations again she is a menace not only as a potential aggressor but as an exponent of power politics. Are we quite sure that the League of Nations

means the abandonment of power politics That is the basi3 of the Covenant. I doubt whether it has been abandoned by all those in the League to-day. You have other countries who are exponents of power politics. But suppose Germany, or Italy if you like, or any other country, is preparing to use her armed strength to gain her own ends, if she is to be restrained she must be restrained by all the Powers of the League not by ourselves alone, or by any group of allies. The measure of the counterweight to any particular armed forces is not the forces of this country or of France, but the combined force of all the loyal Powers in the League of Nations. If Germany seeks aggression or wishes to play the game of power politics, she must be met by the combined forces of all the peaceful States. That is what the Lord Privy Seal said in his speech, but it is not the way in which rearmament is put before us by the Government. The measurement is always of this country against another country. What does this mean as a matter of practical politics? The right hon. Gentleman says that really we are in a state of emergency and has planned a proposal of rearming to bring us to a certain point in two years time. I do not know what is supposed to happen at the end of that two years.

What does this mean as a matter of practical politics? It means that if we are to bring the aggressor to a halt he must be made to realise that if he challenges the world he will be met by the co-ordinated forces of the world, not by a number of disjointed national forces, belonging to States each looking at the other jealously, each of them in economic rivalry with the other and playing the game of beggar-my-neighbour in post-war economics. It must be a united League. We talk about the co-ordination of defence; the co-ordination of the peace forces of the world is quite as important and as necessary as the co-ordination of the different services of this country. If you are going to assume—I will not point to any particular Power—a united aggressive and armed Power challenging the world it is perfectly suicidal for the supporters of peace to be disunited. If they are merely a collection of States animated by ideas of national defence trying to be self-sufficing, they will be beaten in detail by the aggressive united national State. Obviously, the only way to meet the aggressor is for the peace-loving States to pool their resources and come together in a real League. This has not been faced up to as a matter of defence policy. There are two strong forces in the world to-day, each with a power of attraction: one the force of a united nationalist State, drawing others to it through fear, and the other the attractive force of a collection of States depending on peace and looking to a peaceful future. Unless you can make the second organisation stronger in itsattraction than the other peace will be lost. We hold thatpeace can be secured only by making the League a reality.

Now comes the immediate question of the air menace. It is a mistake to consider air separately from other forms of defence. Defence is a single question of the Army, Navy and Air Forces; the three are parts of a single whole. As a matter of fact, it has been referred to before in this House; the arguments put forward for the three Defence Services are sometimes based on entirely different potential enemies and do not relate to the same set of affairs. We hold that the only way to get unity in defence

is by unity of objective, and when unity of objective has been arrived at then the whole defence forces of this country can be considered as a contribution to collective security. Once you get into the arguments of the White Paper on defence, in which you measure the forces of your Navy against one Power and your Air Force against another, And your Army against another, you will absolutely lose any possibility of co-ordination of the forces.

We necessarily stress the question of air warfare to-day, partly because of the German menace and partly because of the rapid and unexpected action in the air. How is the air menace to be met? We discussed it at length in the celebrated Debate in 1932, and now we have proposals which were thoroughly exploded by the Lord President of the Council in that Debate. I have very Little faith in a, Western Air Pact. You may get some kind of 'a pact, but it is an extremely dangerous suggestion because of the rapid action in the air, which means that the Government might have to come to an immediate decision on reports sent in that something had happened. You cannot get out of it in that way. The countering of the air menace by the operation of a national force, which is put forward to-day, involves the bombing of the civilian population as a normal process of warfare. It means the organisation of the air force and training it with that objective. I will give a quotation here. Herr Hitler said: “They believe it possible to proscribe the use of certain arms as contrary to international law and to ostracise those still using them as outside mankind, its rights and laws. This limitation can be extended into complete international outlawry of all bombing.” That is one of his suggestions. Later on he says: “As soon as the dogs of war were loosed on the people, the end began to justify every means.” In his later thoughts he returned and followed almost exactly the line taken by the Lord President of the Council. He said: “The prohibition of the bombardment of the civil population is impracticable so long as any bombing exists at all.” Therefore, I say that limitation is impossible and that the operation of national air forces operating against other countries and other national air forces means the organisation of -the air forces for bombing the civilian population. It means something more —it means that gas-proof and bomb-proof shelters will become ordinary features of civilisel life. The whole of this problem is caused by the enormous rapidity and unexpectedness of air attacks. We say that those are right who say that there can be no safety As long as you have national air forces, and that the only way is to concentrate all air power in the hands of the League. That does not mean that the League is to bomb civilians, but that the authority would be in the League to handle air power and to deal with any aggression by land or naval forces. We believe that you must have international organisation of civil aviation.

I notice that there was nothing about civil aviation in Herr Hitler's speech, nor did we hear anything from the Lord President of the Council about that; yet it is vital to the whole question. What is the use of limiting your expenditure on your fighting aeroplanes when all over Europe enormous subsidies are being given for civil aviation. Everybody knows that none of the civil aviation lines pays and that every degree of subsidising is going on. I fancy the peak of that is reached in Italy where 98.2 of the receipts of civil aviation are derived from subsidies. You cannot separate civil aviation from military aviation, and I think it is

beside the mark to talk as the Lord President did about a parity of 1,500 front-line aeroplanes, Or anything of the sort, unless you are going to take into account that enormous potential reserve behind. We hold that there is no way out of this air menace except to grapple with it on international lines. I think we should face up to that. This has been put forward by the statesmen of various countries. Let us put it to Hitler as well., Some papers think that Hitler is genuine some think he is not. If he is genuine, he will respond. If he is not genuine, all is bluff. But we must make the League areality—and that is one side of making it a reality.

There was another phrase in Herr Hitler's speech which struck me, and that was his reference to the "unchecked pursuit of uneconomic autarchy." I think you must face the economic facts Behind all this war talk and all this talk of defence and nationalism. I think the only way in which you are going to meet and bring into the League Germany and any other Power is by making the League so attractive that they will come in. You will only do that by making that the centre of the reform of the world's economic system, which has entirely broken down. We have to face the fact that the proposal of the Government offers no defence against air attack. To put up parity is to deceive people into thinking that you are doing something which will protect them against any aggressor State which wants to use the air. The only way you can prevent it, possibly, is by means of an immensely stronger force. You cannot have that without a world-wide organisation of force against a potential aggressor, whoever that aggressor is; and far better than that is the abolition altogether of air forces. It may be said that this is impossible. Well, let us begin it at all events within the ring of the peace States that will come in to make your peace circle a reality. I want to say a word on the question of the other Services. If the Government are resolved to increase armaments, we cannot prevent them doing so; but let us see that what they do produce in the way of armaments is satisfactory. I am not in the least satisfied that we are getting a real return for what we pay for armaments. I doubt very much, and particularly after reading the Statement on Defence, whether the role of the Army and Navy in a collective peace system has been worked out at all. The observations on those forces appear to be taken straight from Service memoranda. With regard to the Navy, I do not think that the effect of aerial warfare has been worked out, or calculations made as to the sort of vessels needed for modern requirements. I am sure that the Army is still based on inefficient and out-of-date ideas. I am convinced that the time has come when you must consider very carefully the organisation of your Navy and your Army and the roles that they have to perform. The tendency is, under the Service Ministries, for a tradition to go on and on. In the Army you have the Cardwell system, which involves the maintenance of a large number of troops in India. A great deal of the Army work in India is police work which cannot he done by mechanised forces; but the whole tendency of warfare in Western Europe is towards an economy in personnel and an increase in material. You have to reconcile those things.

I am glad to hear that the Government are thinking of the question of having a Defence Minister, because I am quite sure that, if

the Government will respond to the suggestion thrown out by Herr Hitler and if they will make renewed attempts to get agreement on armaments, they must be represented by people who will speak for the whole of the Services, who will discuss the matter of defence as a whole, and who will not remit the various Service questions to be discussed by little committees of experts.

The Government want national unity on defence questions. If they want that, they must first agree on policy. They will only get agreement in this country on policy if they go and make a collective system a reality and if they work for disarmament and not for rearmament. And they can only save the peace and the League by making a real sacrifice of sovereignty. You will not make a strong League by mere political action or even by unified defence, but only by a unified economy. The lesson of all recent wars is more and more that the thing that counts to-day in war is not merely an Army but the whole of the forces behind it. The forces that make for peace in this world are infinitely stronger than those that make for war. If you put aside those countries which have gone out of the League and those countries which the Lord President referred to where you have the will of an autocrat supreme, and put the peace-loving Powers in the other scale, economically and potentially in every possible way they are far the wealthiest and far the strongest. The one thing they lack is unity. We ask this Government to give a lead to the world. We are not satisfied with the proposals put forward by the Government. Their defence proposals to-day are not related to the doctrine in which they profess to believe—that of collective security. The speech of the Lord President was a plea for creating an air force equal to that of another State, but he did not attempt to argue that it was giving us any security. For these reasons, we cannot agree with it, and therefore I beg to move the reduction of the Vote.

5.12 p.m.

Sir ARCHIBAL. D SINCLAIR We are met to-day not merely to deplorethe existing situation, tragic and in many aspects forbidding as it is; nor to attribute responsibilities for past failures; but to discuss an issue upon which we, almost without exception in this House, are fundamentally united—the defence of the honour, peace and integrity of this country on which, as the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Carnarvon Boroughs (Mr. Lloyd George) said in November, there is, except as to method, no division in this House or in the country. It is not, therefore, a primary purpose of mine to criticise the Government this afternoon, though I shall tellthe House quite frankly that I approach this problem from a. somewhat different point of view. Still less do I wish to make debating scores against the Government; and I should like to begin by paying a humble but sincere tribute to the Lord President of the Council for his grave, serious, moving and powerful speech this afternoon.

The situation revealed in the Lord President's speech contains features of undeniable gravity, but it is reassuring to observe that

he still does not accept the figures which were given to the House a few weeks ago by my right hon. Friend the Member for Epping (Mr. Churchill). Three weeks ago that right hon. Gentleman said that the German force was substantially superior to ours now, and that at the end of this year the German force would be three or four times as strong as ours. Well, the Lord President this afternoon proposed to reach parity with Germany as quickly as possible at a strength of 1,500 first-line machines, and that is an increase in strength of almost exactly 25 per cent. as compared with the figures given to us by the Under-Secretary when we debated the Air Estimates a few weeks ago. He said we should reach 1,170 first-line machines. That is very nearly 1,200, and the new proposal is an increase of 25 percent.

The UNDER-SECRETARY of STATE for AIR (Sir Philip Sassoon) That is purely an Empire force.

Sir A. SINCLAIR The Lord President did not say that. It is very important to have that Point cleared up. I will leave it meanwhile and come back to it when discuss the question of parity. It is important for all of us to find out exactly what is meant by parity. It is an increase of nearer 50 per cent. in the strength of the Air Force, I now understand. No doubt the Under-Secretary will give the figures later.

The danger of the situation arises from the fact that Germany, on the plea of restoring her national honour, in defiance of her treaty obligations and at a time when a modification of those obligations was under discussion with her fellow signatories, is not only creating the greatest army and air force in Europe, and conscripting men, women and industry for war, but is teaching her young men and boys to glorify war. Herr Hitler said last night that it was only dictated treaties which he refuses to observe, but his present policy of feverish re-armament, physical and moral, and General Goering's recent announcement that force is right, are difficult to reconcile with the renunciation of war as an instrument of national policy; and the Kellogg Pact was not a dictated treaty.

On the other hand Herr Hitler, in a speech which seems to me a sincere and eloquent, expression of the present mood and purpose of the Government of Germany—I am sure we all welcome the reference which the Lord President made to that speech, and his assurance that it will receive the fullest and fairest consideration in a spirit of sympathy and candour—protested his desire for peace. Indeed it is difficult to believe that anything short of imminent economic disaster or domestic collapse would impel the German Government to run the appalling risk of war in the present situation. The Lord President exhorted us to avoid the spirit of panic. Speaking for myself I see no ground in the situation for panic or for comparison with August,1914. In 1914 Germany had the most powerful and best equipped army in the world, the second strongest fleet, and immense industrial and financial equipment and strong allies. Now, with an army 30 per cent. smaller and less well equipped, with the

utmost difficulty in obtaining essential raw materials, with a very small fleet but a very powerful air force, she stands before a world almost united in the support of peace and international law.

In such circumstances disloyalty to the League of Nations is a danger to peace, and therefore to civilisation itself. The pursuit of national aims or the adoption by a member of the League of a policy of isolation, a refusal to apply Article 19 of the Covenant to remedy Germany's just grievances, or unwillingness to recognise her equality of status and her right to share in the material blessings of civilised commerce, or, on the other hand, a threatened collapse in the economic or social structure of Germany, or such an increase in her relative military power as would encourage her Government to believe in the possibility of a knock-out blow—one or more of these factors injected into the present situation would confront civilisation with the fearful danger of war. To avert it, I believe it is above all necessary that every nation should be loyal to its obligations and itsresponsibilities—all its responsibilities—under the Covenant of the League.

The first of those responsibilities is to do equal justice to all nations in the execution and modifications of peace treaties. Unless Article 19 is recognised as enjoying equality of status with Articles 10 and 16 of the League Covenant, the League forfeits its character as the organ of public right, and becomes merely an alliance of the satisfied Powers to preserve the status quo as long as they can against the dissatisfied Powers. In such a revival of the Holy Alliance we can have no part. Nor has Germany since the War, from the time of the result of the Silesian Plebescite, to the long-drawn-out disarmament wrangle, ending with the rejection of Herr Hitler's proposals last April, been treated with the scrupulous fairness and consideration which are due to a proud and valiant nation.

I could not be present at the Debate three weeks ago, but I read with keen interest and admiration the speech of the Noble Lord the Member for South Dorset (Viscount Cranborne). In the course of that speech the Noble Lord made an astounding comparison between the truculence of Germany and the forbearance of France. At any time during the last 15 years, he said, France could have attacked Germany, and he went on to suggest reasons why France refrained. But she did not refrain; she did attack Germany, and we shall never understand the present situation in Germany or the psychology of the Germans if we forget the Ruhr, the grossest blunder which blackens the record of post-War statesmanship, which not only undermined the financial foundations of the Weimar Republic, but destroyed the middle classes of Germany, driving the victims into the arms of militarism, and stirred up that tempest of anger and humiliation which broke in the Hitler revolution. The people of Germany are entitled to receive justice and equality of status and treatment, and I am convinced that until this demand is satisfied Germany will remain a danger to peace and will yet enjoy a great measure of active sympathy in this country.

If peace is to be established in the political sphere, it must equally be established in the economic sphere. That cropped up in Herr Hitler's speech last night. I welcomed the Lord President's reference to this vital factor in the situation. You cannot have peace in the world while nations are levying economic warfare one against another. Men in all parties in this country indicated that the success of the World Economic Conference was essential to world peace. It was because the Government adopted policies which, in my opinion and that of my political friends, made the success of that Conference impossible, that we resigned. [Interruption.] Certainly. Some hon. Members do not seem to appreciate the significance of the Government's policy or of our protest. The Conference when it sat was a terrible fiasco. There were many causes of its failure, but the fundamental cause—do not let us hide it from ourselves—was that while the Government were inviting the co-operation of foreign countries in the restoration of international trade and finance, they were boasting of the adoption of a policy of deliberate and artificial diversion of trade from foreign countries to Empire countries.

Germany has suffered from this as much as any country. I will quote two figures. I am not going to take the figures which would be most advantageous, those of the boom years 1928 to 1929. I am taking the figures for 1930 and 1931, slump years, when the average annual value of Anglo-German trade was £103,000,000, compared with an average of £54,000,000 for the years 1933 and 1934. The German people have suffered terribly from this destruction of trade. One of the greatest contributions to the revival of peace which this Government has it in its power to make, is to revise its economic policy, to summon a fresh economic conference, and to bring Germany not only within the political comity of nations but also into active co-operation with ourselves in all the works of civilisation and in raising the standards of life of both peoples.

Then I say that we, the common people of this country, who loathe war, are entitled to the most concrete assurance that Ministers are throwing the whole weight of their power and influence into action for ridding the world altogether of the dreadful menace from the air. Let the action be immediate and public. Let the Government table detailed and definite proposals for the abolition of military air forces and the control of civil aviation. If the proposals are resisted, let the responsibility be clearly and publicly fixed. For two years the Air Commission of the Disarmament Conference has not been summoned. It is two and a-half years since the Lord President said: “In my view it is necessary for the nations of the world concerned to devote the whole of their minds to this question of civil aviation, and to see if it is possible so to control civil aviation that disarmament will be feasible.” Unfortunately other Ministers have since thrown cold water on this idea. They object that it might slow down the progress of civil aviation—a small price to pay for the protection of civilisation from air bombardment. What is the result of the two and a-half years study of this question, to which the Lord President summoned the nations of the world? The Spanish Government and the French Government have tabled detailed proposals. They have not even been discussed. We call upon the Government, and beg the Government, to table definite proposals of their own, and to take steps to have them promptly

and publicly discussed.

In the meantime, I hope it will be explained to us to-day why the Western Air Pact has been allowed, as the "Times" says this morning, to fall into the background. Herr Hitler brought it forward again last night. Will that policy be taken up again and pressed forward, with the firm resolve to make it the basis of disarmament and not of rearmament? We on these Benches repudiate emphatically the view put forward by the Chancellor of the Exchequer some two months ago that one inevitable consequence of the conclusion of an Air Pact must be an increase in our armaments. We agree, on the contrary, with General Smuts who said: “Security should never be given without a reduction of armaments as a quid pro quo. The proposed London air pact would fail in its purpose unless accompanied by a reduction of armaments among the heavily armed Powers.” Herr Hitler agreed last night that bombing should be prohibited. He has agreed to international supervision and inspection of armaments. He has agreed to dispense with any weapon that other nations will discard. He has agreed that this Western Air Pact should be a means of reaching out towards a definite reduction in air armaments. It is true, and the fact must be faced, that in the absence of military aircraft, bombing and fighting could be conducted in ordinary civil aircraft. It has often been said in these debates that our own civil aircraft are almost useless from that point of view. International agreements would make it possible to reduce still further the military potentialities of civil air craft.

The worst dangers would, therefore, be averted if progress were made on the lines of a Western air pact, and I hope that someone from the Government Front Bench will assure us that that matter will be taken in hand, at least as resolutely and as promptly as the measure of rearmament which the Lord President has announced. Such a pact should include international supervision and control of civil aviation, the outlawry, as Herr Hitler suggested, of air bombing, and drastic disarmament in the air, leaving comparatively small national air forces to prevent the abuse of civil aviation. Between those air forces close co-operation ought to be encouraged, with the intention that it would eventually lead to their amalgamation in an international air force under the control of the League of Nations.

Nevertheless, while disarmament ought vigorously to be pursued as the chief objective of the Government, a situation in which a great country, not a member of the League of Nations, possesses the most powerful army and perhaps the most powerful air force in Western Europe, with probably a greater coefficient of expansion than any other air force, cannot be allowed to endure. The right hon. Gentleman the Member for Epping (Mr. Churchill) in the last Debate suggested that the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Darwen (Sir H. Samuel) on the same occasion showed a change of opinion. My right hon. Friend the Member for Darwen and I and the rest of us who speak from these benches have consistently declared that we should feel bound to support measures of national defence when clear proof was afforded of their necessity. The right hon.

Gentleman the Member for Epping went on to say that the Government's main duty was to secure the safety of the country by building up to numerical parity, in aeroplanes, with Germany. For my part, I do not believe that national security can be obtained or peace preserved by attachment to a formula of numerical parity. Indeed, I would ask the Government—and I think it is very important that this should be cleared up—what precisely is meant by that formula of parity with the German air force. In the first place, I would observe that Herr Hitler, as we all read this morning and as the Lord President of the Council told us this afternoon, has made it clear that his air force is measured by that of France. Ours is to be measured by that of Germany. Ours therefore must obviously be measured by that of France. Surely we can avoid the necessity for some of these proposed measures by getting into touch speedily with France and pressing forward with the idea of an air pact between France, Germany and ourselves. Could we not in that way reach an agreement on a lower basis than that of the present programmes of Germany and France?

Further, let me assume that the Government adhere to the policy of numerical parity with Germany. Do they, on the one side, include only the German first-line machines, or do they include, in addition, the German dual purposes machines—those civil aviation machines which can be easily transformed and are in fact fitted for speedy transformation into bombing machines 7 I ask the Under-Secretary for Air to state specifically whether those machines are to be included in the calculation of Germany's air strength. On the other side, is it proposed to include our air force over-sea I understand from the interruption of the right hon. Gentleman at the beginning of my speech—a perfectly courteous interruption for which I was obliged—that such is not the intention. Then, will our Fleet air arm be included in the calculation of our air strength for the purpose of arriving at parity 7 Will our auxiliary squadrons be included in our air strength for the purposes of this formula of parity; and if so, is that the whole extent of the formula?

When the right hon. Gentleman has answered those questions, as I am sure he will answer them to-night before the close of this Debate, are we to understand that that is the whole extent of the formula of parity—because of course it leaves a great many other vitally important questions out of account? Geographical parity is something which we can never achieve. Our great capital, London, our great naval dockyards the great Sources of supply of the food of our people all lie far nearer to any potential aggressor from Europe than his corresponding establishments do to us. Then we come to another vital question which the Lord President himself raised. Are reserves and powers of industrial expansion to be considered in that formula? In a striking speech, delivered with all the authority of his great experience, the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Carnarvon Boroughs in November said that what mattered in the air was the power of rapid expansion. That is a vital issue, and we ought to be told at once exactly what this formula is. If it is merely numerical parity, let us know that. Do not let us accept the formula on the basis that it only means numerical parity, to be subjected afterwards to increased demands, to proposals that the

formula should be stretched to cover a great many other factors and to be told that, in accepting numerical parity, we have committed ourselves to those extensions.

This question of the power of expansion is one of the most Serious involved in the present situation. General Goering boasted that he had expanded—of course on the Meccano principle, the principle of having certain factories each producing one part or one group of parts of aeroplanes and then sending those parts to great central factories where they are assembled—he boasted that he had expanded the industrial capacity of Germany to such an extent that he was able to create his air force at a single blow. Herr Hitler last night asserted that he had not 10,000 aeroplanes, and I believe him, but has he got the three or four extra sets of jigs and gauges which would enable him to treble or to quadruple his air force, just as General Goering created it, at a single blow?

While a formula of parity cannot, therefore, give us national security, nor, in itself, preserve peace, I tell the Committee frankly that I have come to the conclusion that in a world in which there is a great and formidable nation which does not accept the obligations of the League Covenant, which is in process of becoming the most powerful nation in Europe and which as the Lord President has reminded us, wraps its armament preparations in impenetrable secrecy, those nations who seek security against aggression in the collective peace system under the League of Nations, must fortify themselves until universal agreement on air, disarmament can be reached. The hon. Member who spoke before me denounced the White Paper on many grounds on which I have denounced it myself, including the fact that it seemed to base itself, in the discussion of national defence, on the principle of isolated defence instead of collective security. The hon. Gentleman also said, and I agree with him, that we have a responsibility to our fellow members of the League. It is a responsibility to which it seems to me we must be faithful. I cannot therefore agree that to increase our national armaments is necessarily inconsistent with our obligations under the collective peace system. It seems to me, particularly in the light of Herr Hitler's speech claiming parity, with the Western Powers only and not with Russia, that the policy of numerical parity is not unrelated, as the hon. Gentleman said it was, to the problem of collective security and that it does afford a rough and not unjust measure of the share which a great, wealthy, peaceful country like this ought to take in the common burden of preserving the authority of the League of Nations and the rule of law.

If such measures of air rearmament are to be undertaken, how ever, we are entitled to demand—and I was glad that the Lord President referred to this point—that private interests shall not Be allowed to profit from the nation's necessities. The Lord President did not fully indicate to the Committee, and perhaps the Under-Secretary will be able to do so later, what measures the Government are going to take to prevent that happening. It is vital that the peaceful nations should be united behind the policy of peace and disarmament and it is vital that our own country should be united in a clear understanding, towards the

formulation of which the Government must actively contribute, that our policy is in essence one of peace and disarmament. This question of private profit being made out of the means of death and destruction is one about which our people feel deeply. I will trouble the Committee with a short quotation from the speech on the subject by a great public figure: "This is one of the questions which arouse very sincere and profound feelings in the minds of our people …. Regarding war as they do, as the greatest evil to which the nation can be exposed and regarding it as only justifiable in cases of ultimate and extreme national necessity, they are disposed to regard the preparation of instruments of war as too high and too grave a thing to be entrusted to any hands less responsible than those of the State itself, fearing any intrusion into so dangerous a field of any interests less imperative than national security and national interest." Those are the words of Lord Halifax, the Minister of Education. I hope that the Government will act in the spirit of those great words which were uttered only two months ago. During the last War immense profits were made by private firms—with a 75 per cent. excess profit duty. Now armament shares are leaping up on the Stock Exchange. Last year the shares of one firm stood at 16s. 6d. Yesterday they were just under 30s. The shares of another firm were 10s. 3d. at one time last year and yesterday they stood at 32s. 6d. Take the firm of Rolls Royce; their shares last year were at one time 44s. and yesterday they stood at £7 10s. As I came into the House to-day there was handed to me a circular sent out by a firm of stockbrokers saying that now was the time for people to invest in armament shares. Foreign aeroplane manufacturers are coming over here in the search for gain and all these influences will be exercised, both subtly and openly, to keep up the presure in construction. I hope, therefore, that the Government will have something more definite than we have yet heard to tell the country as to how they propose to keep this element of private profit out of the present scheme of expansion.

For my part, I think there ought to be national factories for dealing with the rapid expansion in air armaments which the Government now contemplate. Do not let us create a new and powerful vested interest in air armaments in order to meet what we all hope will prove to be, as the Lord President said he hoped it would prove to be, a passing emergency. We must not allow ourselves to be caught up in this hideous machine of our own creation in such a way that we shall be unable to disentangle ourselves from it when the need for it has ceased to exist. This is a vital matter and I hope that the Under-Secretary when he speaks will elaborate the Government's proposals in that respect.

While, therefore, I agree with deep reluctance—I would even say with repugnance—that the case for an expansion in our air armaments has been made out, let me say that it is the duty of the Government to emphasise that this is not a permanent addition to our national armaments but an emergency contribution to the collective system of peace under the League of Nations. Let the Government avoid the creation of new vested interests in the manufacture of war planes and let them pursue with fresh vigour and resolution the policy of international appeasement and disarmament through the League of Nations, as the

one and only means of preserving the safety of our country and the peace of the world.

5.45 p.m.

Earl WINTERTON I should like to bring the Committee back to a fact that has been rather forgotten during the very eloquent speech by the right hon. and gallant Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Sir A. Sinclair), to which we have just listened. This is not a Debate on foreign policy. This Debate was asked for many weeks ago, which the Government have generously granted in order that we might discuss whether the defences of this country are adequate for their purpose, and whether they are sufficient to enable us to pay our just quota to the system of collective security. I am not complaining of the right hon. and gallant Gentleman's speech, but if we in this House, by listening to tense and emotional rhetoric, could secure peace and security in Europe, then, in the words of Mr. Kipling: "Lord God, we have paid in full." For years past we have heard from every Front Bench, from all the elder statesmen in this House, speeches during which a pin could be heard drop, and regarding which one was told afterwards by commentators in the Gallery that never was the House of Commons more impressed. To-day we are more concerned with facts and figures, and it is to them that I propose to address myself. I should like to say that in considering the facts of the actual situation in which we stand, and in which Europe stands, I do not imagine that anyone in Germany, where, incidentally, I, personally, have many friends, including some in high positions—and, as a matter of fact, I am spending Whitsuntide there—will object to this House considering and analysing in this Debate, not how foreign policy stands, but how we stand at this moment. The Germans are realists, and so, too, are the French.

The position has been made very much easier by Herr Hitler's speech from the point of view of considering the situation. Herr Hitler says that he claims, leaving Russia out of his calculations, an army greater than that of any army in Europe, greater indeed, when it is completed, as it would appear from a most cursory examination of the available population figures, than France can easily put in to the field—let the Committee realise that these are facts, they are not emotion or rhetoric, but facts —secondly, an air force equal to the greatest air force in Europe, that is, much larger than our present Air Force; and, lastly, a navy equal to 35 per cent. of our own in tonnage, though the Germans have admittedly only a few hundred miles of coastline to guard with their navy, and we in peace and war, whether we are engaged in war or not, have to keep open the channels and sea lanes of the whole world. It was possibly in anticipation of Herr Hitler's speech that the Foreign Secretary, with what I think I must describe as the full, rich cream of unconscious humour, said the other day at Kilmarnock, that the prospect of getting agreement on the level of armaments was not decreased, but increased by the fact that there was not now so great a disproportion as there had been in the past. My comment on that statement is that it is clear that the German level is, at any rate, well up to skyscraper height; that is to say, the level to which they are going to attain. I am not criticising Herr Hitler. It is

true that he did say that when that level was attained he might be and would be willing to consider reduction.

The principal object of my intervention in this Debate is that it is necessary to give a recital of events during the last two years in connection with this question of air defence, because so grave an error has been made by the Government in its calculations of Great Britain's and Germany's relative air strength that it is in the public interest that someone should categorically call attention to the facts. It is perhaps appropriate that I should do it. Having—if I may make use of a quotation of St. Paul—borne stripes in this House and outside it for my support of the Government on another great issue, I can scarcely be accused of reciting these facts for the purpose of causing embarrassment to them. I should like to say that on a matter of great moment at this time, a matter, as I think, of the greatest gravity that we have had to deal with since the War, it is the duty of every Member of this House to present the facts as he believes them to exist and to tell the truth as he sees it, irrespective of fear and favour, irrespective of the fear of political punishment and of the anticipation of political favour. He should state them as he sees them, and one of the reasons why the hon. Members who are commonly known as the Clyde group have, in the opinion of all quarters of the House, such a high position in this House is because it is known to be composed of men who are prepared to tell the truth as they see it without any regard to their own personal position. It is in that spirit that I propose to address myself to this very grave matter this afternoon.

I fully agree with the Lord President when he said, quite properly and rightly if he will allow me to say so, that when you are challenging the figures put forward by a Government in a matter of great import, and when you are challenging their attitude, it is both personally unfair and constitutionally wrong to accuse an individual Minister. If the question is big enough, if the issue is great enough, and if the House has been misled, no doubt unintentionally, as I claim it has been misled in this particular instance, the blame rests, not upon one particular Minister, but upon the whole Government, and I was very glad when my right hon. Friend, with—if he will allow me to say so—that sense of what is right and proper that he always displays, made it abundantly clear that he and the whole Government were prepared to take responsibility for the lamentable mistakes that have been made in the last two years. Now let me give a very short summary of what those mistakes are.

In March, 1933, my right hon. Friend the Member for Epping (Mr. Churchill) warned the House of Commons that Germany was creating a military air force, in breach of the Treaty of Versailles. In that Debate my right hon. and gallant Friend the Member for the Drake Division of Plymouth (Captain Guest) reiterated this warning, and brought on his head a strong rebuke from the Lord President. I should like here to interpolate a word of praise for what my right hon. Friend the Member for Epping has done in this matter. But for him, and Lord Rothermere and the "Daily Mail" and, at a later stage, Mr. Garvin in the "Observer," the public and the House of Commons would have been until quite recently in complete ignorance of the gravity of

the situation. The country is, in my judgment, under a heavy debt of gratitude to them all. It is true that in recent months other newspapers and persons have become aware of the peril, but they are like people who have been awakened from a deep sleep by an alarm clock, set by somebody else; or perhaps a more exact analogy would be of people suffering from frostbite who, suddenly realising the fact, begin vigorously to rub their limbs. But to those persons and institutions I have mentioned we should be very grateful.

When talking of this information which was given by my right hon. Friend and others, I might interpolate a reference to what was said by the Foreign Secretary in debate a short time ago. He seemed to think that some of us on these benches had made some attack on some portion of the Civil Service. He referred to "a Service working in obscurity," by which, I presume, he referred to the Secret Service, but the attack only existed in my right hon. Friend's imagination. It was not necessary to use the Intelligence Service to find out, in broad outline, what everybody who has chosen to study the question could find out for himself at any time during the last two years. I entirely agree with what General Goering, I think it was, at any rate, a high official of the German Government—said the other day, that while there had been no official announcement until recently, there had been no attempt to conceal what was going on. I think that should be known, because while it is true, as my right hon. Friend said, that an authoritarian Government such as the German Government can do and conceal things that the Government of this country could not, any man who went to Germany with his eyes open at any time (luring the last two years could see what was going on and did in fact see.

Despite the warning given to the Government, nothing was done to take advantage of it. Instead, we had one of those perennial peregrinations of representatives of the British Foreign Office, so damaging alike to the health and reputations of those who take part in them, wandering like Bedouins over the eternal sands and looking for something which they never find. Months were wasted in attempts to do something which everyone in the Government and this House, which is almost as much to blame as the Government, must have known could not be achieved, and that is to reduce the air forces of France and Italy at a time when everyone knew that Germany was increasing hers. We had the usual emotional appeal sand response in the Press Gallery, the usual talk in the country that everything was much better when everything was getting much worse. Then last year, in 1934, there was an announcement made in the Summer, as the Committee is aware, at long last, that there was going to be an increase. The solemn pretence that Germany still bad no military air force continued to be maintained all through the Summer, both in answer to questions and in debate. Finally, we come to the debate in November, 1934. A number of us, all Privy Councillors and all, I think one may say without conceit, occupying responsible positions in this House, put down an Amendment to the Address, which I would like to quote, because it is very pertinent to my recital of what has occurred: “But humbly represent to Your Majesty that, in the present circumstances of the world, the strength of our national defences, and

especially of our air defences, is no longer adequate to secure the peace, safety, and. freedom of Your Majesty's faithful subjects."—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 28th November, 1934; col. 857, Vol. 295.]" That was a very definite statement which was put down and debated. In this debate the first admission was made by the Lord President, on behalf of the Government, that Germany had an air force. For the first time the National Government admitted the existence of something which had been going on for at least 18 months. My right hon. Friend's words were: "I think it is correct to say that the Germans are engaged in creating an air force."—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 28th November, 1934; col. 875, Vol. 295.]" He controverted the right hon. Member for Epping's statement of the gravity of the situation vis à vis the German air force. I will not give the whole quotation, but my right hon. Friend, with the honesty which we all expect and the attitude of candour which is one of the reasons why he has the greatest position, in my experience of the House, that has ever been occupied by any Leader of the House, admitted quite frankly, in the course of his statement to-day how wrong he had been in his anticipations about the future. He still denies that he was wrong in criticising the right hon. Member for Epping's figures of the then existing position, but I will leave it, to my right hon. Friend the Member for Epping to deal with that. I think the Leader of the House was also wrong in his second statement. It goes a little further. At the end of my right hon. Friend's speech, which, as usual, had an immense effect, he used these very pregnant and important words: "All that I would say is this, that His Majesty's Government are determined in no conditions to accept any position of inferiority with regard to what air force may be raised in Germany in the future."—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 28th November, 1934; col. 883, Vol. 295.]" If ever a pledge were given in this House which had a definite and distinct meaning in a matter of the utmost gravity and importance, it was that pledge which meant that never would Germany be allowed to have an air force superior to our own. I submit that in all essentials she has got it to-day. In March of this year, the Under-Secretary of State for Air still said that we had a substantial superiority over Germany, and that even in November, 1935, we should still have a superiority. A fortnight later Herr Hitler informed the Foreign Secretary that the German Air Force had a first-line strength equal to our own. The complete discrepancy between the Under-Secretary's statement and that of Herr Hitler would, in a House of Commons keener of criticism of the Government than the present House—that is, a pre-war House, and I should have hoped a post-war House—have provoked the keenest controversy. Do hon. Members realise that for the first time since the time of Charles this country is in a, position of inferiority in respect of an arm which could be effectively used for the invasion of this country? And this has happened in face of all that was said on the matter.

I do not propose to analyse what my right hon. Friend has said in to-day's Debate. We can be thankful for something. He is going to increase our first-line aeroplanes, I understand, to 1,500. I would only like to say that the circumstances surrounding the creation of that increased Air Force alarm me. We are apparently going to take two years to do it, and meanwhile every

day Germany is becoming relatively stronger in proportion to ourselves. I am informed that the Germans could produce 20 military aeroplanes a day. My right hon. Friend said that there was a need for rapid construction. If there is need for anything, there is a. need for rapid construction in the most rapid way possible, if necessary, by war emergency measures. He then said that the Government were carefully examining the organisation. For years past the Government have been carefully examining every sort of problem and exploring possibilities, but surely we are entitled to know when we are to have this production of aeroplanes. I could not help thinking, when standing at the grave of someone in Dorset yesterday, the grave of a very great man, certainly the greatest man under whom I have served, what a terrific loss to the country his death was, and what a loss was the fact that he did not accept some great position of responsibility. It is a man of that type we want to-day to get the country out of the appalling position in which it is. No ordinary method, no sending of the right hon. A to office B, or the right hon. B to office C is going to deal with the situation. It is not a question of altering men, but of altering methods in order to face this terrific situation.

I could give a number of figures, but I do not want to bother the Committee with them. I will only ask the Committee to ask itself this question: How comes it that the strongest Government of recent times, both in influence and in their majority, have allowed Great Britain to lag behind Germany in air force strength and in the production of military aeroplanes, despite reiterated pledges to the contrary? The full, the appalling gravity of the situation can only be measured by remembering the following irrefragable facts. The German nation, as a whole, possesses, in a mental and physical sense, virility and determination which has seldom, if ever, been exceeded in the world's history. No one who has any friendship, as I have, with individual Germans can doubt that. See the German boys in school; see the German young men and women; see the magnificent physique and determination of these people. She was our principal opponent in the War, and she was defeated, as she claims, in that War by a combination of circumstances in which treachery at home played a large part. That is her own opinion. Despite honest endeavours on her part and ours to find a, solution—an honourable compromise—her grievances arising from the Treaty of Versailles are, in her judgment, still unredressed. Herr Hitler's speech was a magnificent speech, which, if delivered here, would have had a magnificent House of Commons. Read what he says of the meaning of the Treaty of Versailles to Germany. Every grievance has to be redressed, he says, before Germany is able to have the status to which she says she is entitled, including colonies.

Vocal and influential sections of opinion in this country, such as trade unions, Jewish organisations, and the Labour party have, whether rightly or wrongly, condemned the leader of Germany in violent language. Let us remember in this connection that Germany is sensitive to criticism, and has always been prone to meet it with the rejoinder that is part of her national philosophy, "Insults can only be wiped out with weapons.", She does not accept the point of view which is, so popular in this country, that

if you say a nasty thing to a person that person says a nasty thing back, and it is all over. She always thinks that insults can only be wiped out with weapons. What are the pacifist organisations doing in this country to make Germany more friendly towards us? Listen to speeches by Lord Cecil. Listen to any branch of the pacifist organisation. Are they doing anything to make Germany more friendly to Great Britain? I think that the humane and the accurate answer to the question which I have propounded is, first, that the Prime Minister, like the Prime Ministers of every post-war Government, is so overwhelmed with work that his position is an absolutely impossible one; secondly, there has been no attempt to set up a policy committee, such as was advocated by my right hon. Friend below the Gangway, to overlook and correlate the administration of the departments whose political heads must, as in all coalition governments, have divergent views on some subjects. It is very largely a departmental Government. Policies are brought forward, and the yare not correlated to what has been done by other departments.

I must say, in justice to Lord Londonderry and other defence Ministers, that it must be remembered that the Cabinet as a whole, with a blindness compared with which a mole is long-sighted, continued to adhere, in all their speeches in the country, to unilateral disarmament long after it was proved to have hopelessly broken down. So far as they have created a political situation which is difficult and dangerous for themselves, they are entirely to blame. Only one Minister in recent months has had the courage to attack what, I think, are the most dangerous elements in this country, namely, the extreme pacifists, and that was the First Lord of the Admiralty in his speech on the Estimates. Other Ministers still apologise for the existence of armaments. Even the Lord President in his speech on the White Paper, which earned encomiums in the House, put forward in apologetic terms a modest case for reducing the terrible disproportion between the Air Force we have and the needs of the situation.

There is a parallel to the situation in which we find ourselves and the situation in which we found ourselves in the matter of finance in 1931. It is that, despite warnings by a few Members of the House and by the Chancellor, the Government went on until the inevitable crisis came. And an inevitable crisis will come in this matter unless something is done to meet what has happened. I would really make an appeal to the Government. They have a, perfectly clear case to present to the country. It is not a party political one, nor is it that of the National Government alone. The case is this: The House almost universally supports collective security, and yet this stark, naked, cruel fact obtrudes itself: Great Britain and the Dominions cannot contribute their proportionate quota to that collective security while their defence forces as so incommensurate with the vast responsibilities and liabilities of the huge sea and land area of the Empire. They have not been able to do for years. It is not the fault only of this Government. We are all to blame for allowing this state of affairs to grow up, for creating the utterly false atmosphere in which we have lived for years past, talking of collective security and the responsibility of the Empire, speaking

with the Union Jack in front of us at great Primrose League and other meeting, and saying, "We are here to defend the Empire," when we have not been doing it.

I agree, to some extent, with one criticism that was made on the opposite Denches, that we want to be careful to avoid mixing up domestic defence with our contribution to collective security. We have been seeing to neither. We cannot effectively defend our Empire and make our pro rata, contribution to collective security. I do not remember a foreign Minister since the War who has not gone through a period of personally harassing attacks. What has been the weakness of all these right hon. Gentlemen? They knew perfectly well that everybody was saying, sometimes behind our backs and sometimes to their faces, "How can we trust the British, honest as they are in intention, to take decisive action in crisis when their forces are inadequate to protect themselves, let alone to protect others, when they allow to go unchecked internal pacifist propaganda which would not be permitted in any other country?" Not in any other democratic country in Europe dare a person try to prevent people joining the forces as the Leader of the Labour party in this country has done. Let them try it on in France, and no amount of Parliamentary immunity which a French deputy has would prevent the law operating. We allow that sort of thing to go unchecked in this country. Let hon. Members try it on in Russia, that home of leniency and moderation, which the pacifist organisations in this country are so glad to see on their side.

Tell the people the truth; tell them that they cannot make their contribution to collective security unless they are prepared to make sacrifices. Let us take this brutal fact to heart. If you will not fight in the last resort to secure that which you have promised to sec are by your signature to a treaty, or by your membership of the League of Nations, you are of no value to yourselves or to others, and collective security becomes a cloak for the most shameless hypocrisy. You can adopt the attitude which some people take outside this House and say that we should enter into no commitments, that we should not join the League of Nations, as the Reverend "Dick" Sheppard says, because it involves fighting. That is a perfectly consistent and logical attitude, and if you hold those views it is an honourable attitude, but do not pay lip-service to collective security and then try to discourage people from joining the Army, the Navy and the Air Force, because that is craven hypocrisy and nothing else, and it is time the Government told the truth to those people. The Government have a perfectly clear line. All they have to do is to take the country into their confidence, and if they do so it will be behind them, and will show all the ancient firmness, resolution and determination which it always shows in a great crisis.

6.16 p.m.

Mr. PICKTHORN I hope I may count on the indulgence which the grace of this House generally extends to those who make

their first incursions into its debates. It is also, I believe, not unusual on these occasions for the speaker to indicate modestly some title that he has for choosing the particular occasion and the particular topic for his first speech; but that is more than I can venture upon. The nearest thing to a qualification for addressing the Committee on this occasion that I can find in the nature of my constituency or in my personal experience is that I have been compelled to be acquainted with an unusually high proportion of the young. Nothing is worse than to divide the population by ages or sexes, as if such divisions marked sections of political interests or could be spoken for by any one person. But there are two plain connections between the young and Imperial Defence. They would have to do it if it ever became active; and passively—though think it difficult for those who do not live among them to realise it—all the people now 20 years of age or under have lived all their life in a post-war world, their ears continually battered with talk about war, and almost always about the horrors of it. Our young men are no doubt as pacific as those of any generation and as those of any other country, but I do not believe their genuine and effective impulse towards peace owes, or could owe, anything to the 17 years of almost unchallenged exaggerations about war and the horrors and futility of it to which they have listened. I believe the effect of all that talk is to do much more harm than good.

The young cannot be frightened out of war. They will do their best to keep out of war for other reasons, and if the elderly are not to be frightened into war, the first step to a reasoned Imperial Defence or, for that matter, to a reasoned pacifism, is to get away from the exploitation of horror. Especially about attack from the air is the avoidance of exaggeration most urgently necessary if there is to be any public facing of the problem of Imperial. Defence. If ever we are subjected to intensive air warfare, what is going to matter is the risk of civilian panic. That will be a far more serious risk than any risk to life or risk of material damage The bombing of towns will be good tactics only if civilian panic is likely, and if we are to be continually working up preliminary and hypothetical panics beforehand, then the adoption of those tactics by any potential enemy is much more likely. New offensive weapons have always been unreasonably and excessively feared. They have always been treated as adding something intolerable to war, which hitherto had been, as Napoleon said, "a fine occupation." But it is not unreasonable to believe that, in fact, primitive weapons are the most terrible, at least to those of us who are not primitive. It is much easier, to some of us at least, to face fighting aeroplanes than to face fighting with knives, and to face fighting with knives than to face fighting with teeth.

What is the new, or a renewed, horror about military aviation is the threatened extension of war risks to women and children. If that horror can be removed by effective agreement against the bombing of towns, it will be a great achievement of humanity, and a great appeasement of human nerves. But however that may be, no new offensive weapon has for long remained unanswered, and the defensive against air attack is certain to develop How fast it will develop I cannot guess, and perhaps nobody can very exactly estimate, but I think it can be said with confidence that it will develop quicker than is usually

supposed, and probably is already so developing. It may be said, also, that one bombing of London would hardly be a serious operation of war at all, and certainly not a decisive strategical achievement. There is loose talk of an air raid destroying London, as there is loose talk of a war destroying civilisation. Does anybody suppose that an air raid would damage London more than the earthquake damaged San Francisco? That was not the end of Californian civilisation. There is no reason for not abhorring earthquakes and wars, but it is a reason for not losing our heads or our hearts in the terror of them. The bombing of London once would not be a major operation of war. It would need repeated and almost continued bombing, and already it may be assumed that the raiding force would lose a considerable proportion of its machines and personnel, and even if such loss be put no higher than 10 per cent., prolonged aerial operations against London would involve a drain on skilled man-power which no general staff could face happily. Every small increase in the percentage of loss would make the difficulty of facing it very much greater, for the loss of skilled personnel would be irreparable.

We have recently heard much of the importance of the capacity to expand industry for warlike purposes, and of the disadvantages suffered in this respect by a democratic society with a mainly individualist economy. If it be true that quick replacement is what matters in war, there is some comfort in the reflection that in air warfare, more even than in other kinds, it is the replacement of men that matters, and that it takes longer to make a pilot than to make an aeroplane. To have the greatest possible number of pilots is, therefore, the most valuable precaution, and with this advantage, that with a pacific people such equipment does not even look like a threat to anybody else. And if, as we all hope, there never be a war again, an ample British share in air transport will nevertheless be a necessity of British greatness and a service to the world. It may be that it would be better if all aviation could be controlled by some in- ternational authority, but even hon. Members opposite seem to agree that that cannot be looked for until such time as the League of Nations includes a new and single and generally accepted economic plan. It does not seem, therefore, that that device is immediately useful for the purposes of defence.

If all aviation is not to be controlled by some one super national authority, it is necessary to remember that enduring naval strength has always had to be founded on a great mercantile marine and on sea-mindedness. The weight of sea-power has always had to be like the iceberg, ten parts foundation to one part visible; or rather, very much more so. That is a truth which we are not likely to forget about the sea, although even about the sea we are apt to forget that we did not always love it, that our Anglo-Saxon ancestors always spoke of the sea in terms of horror at its widow-making capacities, and so forth—in terms of as much horror as anybody to-day speaks of the air. Not only of the sea, but of the air also it is true, and it has been the orthodox and official doctrine, at least since the Northcliffe Committee on civil aerial transport in -1918, that air power must be founded upon mercantile aviation. But not everyone has been sufficiently penetrated with that truth, the truth that what most needs doing for the eventuality of war in the air is something that remains no less truly useful even if there were never to be a

war again, something which tends to draw men nearer together, to practise in peace time the virtues which are, in peace time, as admirable and meritorious, if not as indispensable and heroic, as in war.

It would be possible to think that this Empire is not worth defending, it would be possible even to think that nothing should ever be defended in arms, and yet to think that it is a British interest and an interest of humanity for all the British Dominions to be joined together by air and for the highest possible proportion of their people to be free of the air. It is high time, therefore, that we began to be urgent, if not anxious, about our civil air fleet, our mercantile aviation. Hitherto, in this connection, those states have had, or at least have seemed to have, a very great advantage which governed very large continuous masses of land—the United States, Germany and Russia. But suppose that freight carriage by air became a reality, an economic possibility, or that the North Atlantic or the Polar air route became reasonably safe, then the scattered conformation of the British Empire might again become as much an advantage as it was in the days when the one essential for defence was the development of a mercantile marine.

We already know that, whether the Atlantic air route develops quickly or not, we can no longer have an Eastern and a Western policy and strategy, but only a world policy and strategy. We already know that Canada is half-way between Europe and the Far East, that she is, apart from India, the Empire's greatest reservoir of man-power. We know, also, that Canada will be the key to all communications between Europe and America, and very likely to the main communications between Europe and the Far East, as soon as regular Atlantic crossings are established. We know that the Canadian people are, if not incomparable, at least unmatched, in the virtues which flying demands. If these things are agreed, and if it be agreed that a mercantile aviation equal to our mercantile marine be a necessity for defence, then it seems clear that the development of east and west main flying routes across the Canadian continent is an urgent necessity. In air strength we are to have parity, this country is no longer to be in a position inferior to any country within striking distance, but, as has been already said, that does not mean really very much unless the reserve of possible pilots is sufficiently large. Lastly, the main difficulty of Imperial Defence is to be sure that at the decisive moment the population of the Empire shall feel itself one and believe itself to be worth defending as one. Nothing could more help fulfilment of those conditions than the development of mercantile aviation.

6.30 p.m.

Captain HAROLD BALFOUR It falls to my lot to have the privilege of congratulating the hon. Member for Cambridge University (Mr. Pickthorn) on his maiden speech, and in doing that I know that though, with the various cross currents of opinion in this House, I shall not have complete unanimity in any of my further remarks, I shall create complete unanimity in

expressing the Committee's appreciation of the speech we have just heard. I am sure I am voicing the views of the Committee in saying that we look forward with the greatest interest to further contributions from the hon. Member to our Debates.

I agree with the Noble Lord the Member for Horsham (Earl Winterton) that the scope of this Debate is not mainly one of foreign policy, but rather of the details of the extension and expansion of our defence services, but, in endeavouring to deal with two points made by the hon. Member for Lime-house (Mr. Attlee), who spoke on behalf of the Opposition, I cannot resist the observation that it is very unfair that this country should be accused of taking part in, or starting, an arms race. Italy can build her battleships, Germany can introduce conscription and build an air force, France can call up reservists and Russia can maintain the greatest standing army in Europe—none of that is an arms race. But directly this country takes the tardy step of putting its defences upon a more reasonable basis, we are accused by our own citizens of starting an arms race. That is an illogical position to take up, but is possibly put forward with the idea of securing political advantage.

The right hon. Gentleman the Lord President of the Council said that there was no need for panic, but the hon. Member for Limehouse said that we ought to have an immediate standstill agreement. I wonder whether the hon. Member has thought out what that would mean. We should be left at a time of the greatest gravity in Europe as defenceless in the future as we are to-day. The Lord President of the Council rightly said that those who are responsible for the government of the country could not possibly contemplate such a course. The right hon. and gallant Gentleman the Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Sir A. Sinclair) deprecated any comparison with pre-war conditions. He made out a case that Germany is economically impoverished, and that she has been war-crushed. Before the War everything was different, he said. I believe that the situation in Europe to-day, as regards the general apprehension of danger, is in some general ways, if not in specific points, nearly the same as it was between 1911 and 1914. Take the condition in Germany—crushed Germany if that is her condition—and consider the dangers of the present situation. On the other side of the scales you must put the fact that there now are countries living under dictatorships, whose population has inadequate foreign and home news. They are living under conditions that certainly did not exist before the War. I would remind the Committee of what the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Epping (Mr. Churchill) said in his writings in 1911, when he was recording his thoughts. Last week-end I was looking up one of his striking passages, and I would commend it to the right hon. and gallant Gentleman the Member for Caithness and Sutherland, the hon. Member for Limehouse and to others who oppose the policy of the Government. The right hon. Gentleman said, in "The World Crisis": “Civilisation has climbed above such perils. The interdependence of nations in trade and traffic, the sense of public law, the Hague Convention, Liberal principles, the Labour party, high finance, Christian charity, have rendered such nightmares impossible. Are you quite sure? It would be a pity to be wrong. Such a mistake could only be made once—once for all.”.

Mr. CHURCHILL We thought it was so then.

Captain BALFOUR The right hon. Gentleman thought, in those days, that those things would stop any crash. I would ask the Committee whether we can get away from the fact that conditions to-day show a grave similarity in many directions to those which existed before the War?

I suppose that all of us who have made speeches in this House regret with a shudder, when we look at past volumes of the OFFICIAL REPORT, some of the action that Germany has been taking behind the veil of secrecy. The Lord President of the Council said that an error had been made in regard to the intelligence and information which reached us as to what was happening. The majority of us who support the Government accepted the facts as they were represented, and made speeches to our constituents and throughout the country. Such influence, be it small or great, as any of us may have used was based upon the wrong assumptions. I regret that fact, but those who have all along been our warners of the developing situation, and those who have hitherto been doubters as to the danger, are now united in support of every step which the Government propose to take to put our defences into better shape.

Herr Hitler has denied that Germany has 10,000 aeroplanes. Anybody who studies the situation knows that, but it does not matter what Germany may have now, and it is rather academic to discuss 100 aeroplanes this way or that, in regard to parity, or whether we or Germany have more first-line aircraft at the moment. That is of small import compared with the grave fact that, in 18 months or 24 months from now, the disparity gap would need panic measures such 'as the Lord President of the Council says we do not need to-day if we take the strong emergency measures proposed. If the intelligence which we receive from Germany continues on the lines of the past, we may expect an air force of several thousand aircraft in Germany within two years. Herr Hitler says that he intends to have a large air force, and all our intelligence reports point to the conclusion that Germany is assembling a large fleet under the veil of secrecy. Any agreement to which we may come in regard to limitation will have to stipulate that that veil shall be drawn very completely aside, if the people of this country and other European countries, in view of Germany's history during the last few years, are to have faith in any limitation agreement.

I would like to give the Committee one or two items of first-hand knowledge in regard to the situation in Germany. I shall not mention names, although I can give them in private if they are required. The information indicates what Germany has been doing. During the War, an enterprising American naval shipwright ordered 1,000 tons of horse-shoe nails instead of 1,000 lbs., and as a result there were great dumps of horse-shoe nails all over America. When certain American aircraft concerns not long ago received inquiries from German firms asking for aircraft supplies, they thought that the same sort of mistake had been

made in the requisition numbers. There are certain parts of aircraft that Germany finds it hard to make, partly from lack of skilled men and partly from inability to produce certain high duty alloys. The requisition asked for 27,000 of a particular type of casting, sufficient to supply 3,000 engines of one particular make. There is at Dessau an aircraft production factory which has been seen at first-hand, and which is organised on the Ford mass production principle. Aeroplane parts go in at one end and come out of a sort of large shed at the other, as finished aircraft, four or five abreast. There are far more than are needed for any commercial purpose. That work is being done behind the veil of secrecy.

Mr. MARTIN I understood the Noble Lord the Member for Horsham (Earl Winterton) to say there was no such veil of secrecy, and that anybody who went to Germany knew what was happening. I now understand from the hon. and gallant Member that there is a veil of secrecy and that nobody who went to Germany could know, looking round the country, what was happening.

Captain BALFOUR I say that a veil of secrecy is drawn over the German production of aircraft from component parts, and that the veil has been drawn very closely. I repeat that the veil will have to be drawn aside very completely if we are ever to agree to aircraft limitation with Germany. However good the veil may be, it is not quite perfect, and it is possible for those who desire to obtain intelligence, commercial or otherwise, to acquire information. Some of that information I have placed before the Committee.

Turning to ourselves, it seems that we have to ask the question: Do we need panic measures, or do we need only the strongest possible emergency measures? I think that the strongest possible emergency measures are necessary and in accordance with three main principles. I trust that the Under-Secretary in his reply will deal with these points. Our first requirement is a large number—a greatly increased number—of aerodromes throughout the whole of this country, in places which are not strategically disadvantageous. There is great difficulty in obtaining land, because solicitors take a very long time writing to each other. Nevertheless a plan can be worked out for taking over instantly, and under compulsory powers, aerodromes throughout the whole of the country. I would remind the Committee that if we ever achieve limitation of aircraft, such aerodromes would have a considerable residual value for potential commercial use, and that helping to build those aerodromes would be valuable national work on which we could put a great many of or unemployed who are in the unskilled category. I am credibly informed that the real reason why Pharaoh built the Pyramids was in order to give employment to his unemployed. If Pharaoh could have a "new deal" in those days, I do not see why the National Government in 1935 cannot do the same, with considerable advantage to the people who are now out of work.

The second point is that we must have a number of factories for the extension and development of aircraft industries, and those factories should not be within the London area. A considerable proportion of the, great aircraft factories at the present time are within a radius of 30 miles of London. I hope that the Government will insist, if they embark on an extension of production, that the production must take place in areas far away from the points most likely to be bombed, and also in areas where the maximum amount of unemployment exists. The third point is that there must be a drastic overhaul of the system of supplies of aircraft for the Royal Air Force. Three years ago the Royal Air Force was the best equipped air force in Europe. I believe that it is difficult to say that now. Some of the types of aircraft now being supplied are semi-obsolete in performance when they are turned out of the factories, and some of those which are deemed experimental aircraft are certainly not experimental in their performance, because they have been surpassed for years past by designers in other countries. This position has arisen because of the slow momentum of the system which has been followed in the construction of this new service, and also because we have always been aiming at aircraft which are something better than those which we were just going to acquire. The result is that to-day the single largest order of aircraft in this country is of 1927 design, and was first in production in 1929. It is true that there have been modifications and alterations which are improvements to the type of aircraft, but the inventive brains of the designers of the firm that produced that aircraft are contained in what I would call the 1927 vintage. I do not think that that is a good enough state of affairs on which to base our future expansion.

Let me repeat that, when the system was built up, the present situation was not envisaged. Indeed, we have only envisaged it during the last year or so, and, therefore, one casts no blame, one makes no accusations, but only endeavours to state the facts. The system of trying to achieve perfection has, however, resulted in such an official check on enterprise, and official procedure has so clogged the wheels of initiative and inventiveness, that to-day our aircraft supplies are not what they should be. Sometimes foreign Governments can get better British aircraft than we are able to supply to our Air Force under the official procedure, and such inefficiencies as exist within the aircraft industry can manage to shelter behind this official clogging up. I believe that if the Government will tell us that this new expansion of the Royal Air Force is to be accompanied by a complete overhaul of our system of supply and development, and that no one interest or individual, nor anyone prejudiced in favour of the past system, will be allowed to stand in the way of this complete overhaul and replacement by something better than has existed in the past—I believe that, if the Government will say that, it will give the Committee confidence that there will be the maximum possible efficiency in the steps to which we are going to give our support to-night. I do not believe it is too late to retrieve the position. We have the best brains; we have the best pilots; we have the finest mechanics, and we have a fine morale. As the Lord President said, our morale is far better than that of any other air service. The pride of those who serve their free country of their own volition is something of which other nations would be glad to have possession to-day. If the

Government will tell us that they are determined to sweep away anything which existed in the past and which does not meet with their approval for the future, I believe that the result of this Debate will be to reassure the Committee and also to reassure the whole country.

6.48 p.m.

Mr. CHURCHILL I think the Lord President was very wise when he declined to form, or to ask the Committee to form, a decisive opinion upon the extremely important speech delivered yesterday by Herr Hitler. In the first place, I have found a difficulty, which I think most other Members of the House must have experienced, in getting a reliable and trustworthy report of that speech. Some of the accounts which summarised it seemed to give a rather more favourable impression than I derived when I read the actual text so far as it NN as presented, and I certainly shall not trespass upon the time of this Debate—which, after all, is a defence Debate: we have tried very hard to get it as a defence Debate—by any attempt to analyse in detail any of the statements of that important deliverance.

I must, however, say that I think it would be a great pity if at the very outset there arose a feeling that some new and extremely hopeful situation had been created. I did not find ground for such a feeling. The attitude which was disclosed by the Head of the German Government and of the German State towards collective security, or pooled security—an excellent phrase, which I believe is current on the Front Opposition Bench—the attitude disclosed toward pooled security was far from being encouraging. The attitude towards noninterference in other countries, which had special relation to Danubian problems, was also far from encouraging. The reference made to the demilitarised zone, and to the inconceivable difficulty—I think that that was the expression used—of Germany observing the sanctity of that zone in view of the French defensive preparations behind their own frontier, was also, I thought, more likely to excite than to allay concern.

I personally welcomed very much the language which Herr Hitler used against the indiscriminate bombing of civilian populations. It gave me the greatest possible pleasure to read those words, and I am sure that that was the feeling of everyone who read them. Certainly, we must take them as a means of pressing this point forward. At the same time, I am bound to remind the Committee that the German Air Force, which has been so newly created, contains a larger proportion of long-distance bombing machines as compared with other types than any other air force in the world.

Lastly, there was the question of the abolition of the submarine. There again we shall all be agreed. No Power in the world would be more glad to see the submarine abolished than what is still the first of the naval Powers of the world. But there is not

much chance, I think, of universal agreement being reached upon that subject. I do not think it is likely to be a step which we shall see taken in the near future. There are countries, very differently circumstanced from us, which regard the submarine as a most convenient way in which a Power which cannot afford a battle fleet, and definitely accepts a minor role in naval matters, can derive a very high measure of defensive security without undue expenditure of men or money. Therefore, while I think the statement which the Head of the German State has made is satisfactory so far as it goes, it would be a mistake if the Committee imagined that that reform for which we have pressed so long and so ardently, namely, the abolition of submarines, is likely to come into force in the near future. On the contrary, the new fact with which we are confronted is the construction, contrary to the Treaty, of a certain number of German submarines, which have been prepared under conditions which made their apparition surprising to other countries. Therefore, although I hope that later study will alter my view, it does not seem to me that the position has greatly changed.

But all must welcome the friendly tone of Herr Hitler, his friendly references to this country, and the several important points which he brought forward and which form a good link upon which conversations could be opened, and negotiations, perhaps, be founded. We should welcome that all the more because we are entering a period of ever-increasing anxiety. Germany has armed, and is arming, upon a scale which is vast, and which is indefinite. Take the German Army, to which my Noble Friend referred. The figure of 550,000 men is quoted with regard to the German Army, but that means 550,000 men in barracks. That is the permanent number, through which will be constantly flowing the enormous annual quotas of recruits which German manhood supplies each year. Each year German manhood actually supplies double the number that are available permanently. The 550,000 is the body retained with the colours, which will very rapidly gather behind it enormous reserves—reserves which in a few years' time will enable that army, which we speak of as an army of 550,000, to mobilise at 2,000,000 or 3,000,000 men. In the meantime, before these reserves have been, so to speak, secreted by the colour units, there are the extra formations of the Brownshirts and other organisations in Germany, amounting to very large numbers, which are available to reinforce the great number of men who are now being gathered together under conscription throughout all the barracks of the Reich.

Then there is the question of the German Navy. It is to be 35 percent, of our Navy. I presume that that means 35 per cent. of the tonnage; I do not know any other way in which a percentage of that kind could be calculated. All I can say is that 35 per cent. of the tonnage of our Navy, if represented by a brand-new fleet, could far exceed 35 per cent. in value; its value might well be a far higher percentage. You cannot compare old ships with new. More than 20 years ago I and my right hon. Friend the Member for South Melton (Mr. Lambert), who is not here at the moment, were presenting to the House estimates for, and working upon the designs of three-quarters of the battleships which are now in our line of battle. All the "Queen Elizabeths,"

the "Royal Sovereigns," and later on the "Renown" and the "Repulse"—12 out of 15—were constructed in the days when I was at the Admiralty more than 20 years ago. These old ships are perfectly capable of doing their duty, perfectly capable of discharging their task, until newer vessels are built, and then the difference between them and the product of modern science and naval knowledge, and the newness of the structure itself, is such that to confront the two types, old and new, would simply be sending your sailors to a horrible struggle under most injurious and damaging conditions. [An HON. MEMBER: "Coronel."] That is a very good case in point.

On the other hand, there are many things which old ships can do, and have to do. When the whole Navy of the country was deployed in all parts of the world, endeavouring to keep open our communications, old ships had to take their part as well as new. Luckily we had great numbers of them. But, as I say, if the Germans are going to build 35 per cent. of our tonnage in new construction, it is perfectly and absolutely clear that we must include in our annual programme a superior construction of new ships, ship for ship in each type. I will not say what the percentage of superiority should be, but we must do that. Otherwise, although we might work out a fairly imposing preponderance in tonnage, when it came to conflict it would be found that we had woefully deceived ourselves and had involved the State in great misfortune. It seems to me that for this purpose we must recover our freedom of design. Not only must we recover our general freedom, because we are limited in all directions, but we must recover particularly our freedom of design.

Looking back upon the Treaty of London I am very glad to think that the Conservative Party gave a united vote against it. In those days my right hon. Friend the Lord President was wiser than he is now; he used frequently to take my advice. We recorded our vote against it. What a disastrous instrument it has been, fettering the unique naval knowledge which we possess and forcing us to spend our scanty money on building the wrong or undesirable types of ships; and condemning us to send out to deep waters and sink vessels like the "Tiger," in itself capable of dealing with the new smaller German battleship; and vessels like the four "Iron Dukes" which would have been invaluable if war broke out for convoying fleets of merchant ships to and from Australia and New Zealand in the teeth of the danger of hostile cruisers. I hope, therefore, that we shall have, some time or other, a clear statement from the Admiralty that new construction by Germany will be met by superior naval construction here. Clearly, for that purpose we shall endeavour to recover our freedom to build and our freedom of design at the earliest possible moment. I venture to say that on a naval matter though I have not often referred to. naval affairs.

I said we were entering a period of serious anxieties. I think it is a period, also, of increasing tension. I will give the House two causes which, it seems to me, cannot possibly be overlooked. The first is this: German unemployment has been very largely cured by German preparations for war. Several millions of people who when Herr Hitler was elected looked to him to provide

them with work have had work conferred upon them; and the method by which that work has been given them has been in the preparation of armaments, or the construction of military roads, or the removal of military factories to remote parts of Germany, and generally in all these processes. The great wheels of German industry have been set working, and they are turning out in endless succession every kind of weapon of war. To reverse or stop that would undoubtedly produce a convulsion in the internal domestic life of Germany and one most likely to cause embarrassment and reproach to theregime.

It seems to me, therefore, that words—I am all for goodwords—cannot form a foundation for our action unless they are accompanied by deeds; and the likelihood of deeds being done in Germany at the present time which will remove the present danger seems to me remote, when you consider what a dire effect it would have upon the immediate economic, industrial and labour situation within that country. Suppose that the supply of raw materials becomes more difficult in Germany, and that the payments across the exchange become more difficult to make, and that for any reason at a time in the not distant future it is found that this great national armament industry in Germany cannot be kept going at its present rate. It is clear that we shall then be in the presence of what I will call a peak of production beyond which a decline may be expected. All I can say is that I think, should that peak be reached, it will be a period big with fate for Europe and a period in which the greatest vigilance and care must be exercised. This is the first cause which leads me to believe that the tension will not diminish and will increase.

But there is another cause, and this second cause I will describe as the suddenness of a possibly decisive attack. That is what is going to increase the strain upon all countries. Before the War only navies were ready. The Committee know what is the condition of the ships of the Royal Navy. They can go to war in a few hours. They have only got to raise steam, fit war-heads on torpedoes, bring up shells and put to sea, and they can fight. They have got everything on board—and that applies to a great part of the Fleet. That was the same with the German Fleet before the War. When I was at the Admiralty we were instructed by the Committee of Imperial Defence that we were to have the Fleet prepared at any time, night or day or at any season of the year, for attack without warning or without declaration of war. We did our best to live up to that extraordinarily strict injunction[Interruption.]I am much obliged to the hon. Member. We were prepared to defend ourselves against attack. Certainly I never thought an opposite conclusion could possibly be drawn, but I am very glad to make it absolutely clear.

That imposed a very great strain, but it was a strain confined to a very few people. The two persons in charge of the Admiralty, the sailors and the politicians and the principal staffs concerned with the movement of the ships themselves were all aware of the condition of strain. But the ordinary crews of the ships were not conscious of anything exceptional. They lived their lives in the ordinary way without taking any care of the day to day disposition of the ships. But still it was a great strain. And in those days armies could not fall upon each other without a moment's notice. Along and important time-pad of

mobilisation, more than a, fortnight, intervened and consequently nations could live and go about their ordinary work in a peaceful manner without this haunting and demoralising fear of a sudden attack, of a bolt from the blue levelled at their heart which might possibly mean destruction. But what is the condition now? That has gone. The motorisation and mechanisation of large parts of these armies enables plans to be made by which hundreds, even thousands, of motor vehicles may be started in the night from different parts a hundred miles behind a frontier and which in the dawn may be found in possession of important parts of a defensive line.

Imagine what a strain that throws upon the French people. I cannot but wonder at their calmness and composure in the face of those dangers which gather about them. They have a defensive line which they have built from the Alps to the Luxemburg frontier, behind which they shield themselves. What is happening under the new conditions being introduced—not by Germany alone certainly hut by modern scientific development—is that an ever larger proportion of the French Army is forced to man these ramparts, and they are bound to consider every daily movement they make from the point of view of possibly being attacked. Probably there is no danger. We all hope there is not. But what I am trying to point out is the state of tension which must affect any great population when such large numbers of persons are compelled to live under those conditions and whose families at home know the conditions they are living under, close to the trenches which they may have to occupy at a moment's notice. For these two reasons, I think the Committee must look forward with anxiety and with seriousness to a condition of increasing strain.

Lastly, above all, there is the air which introduces the mosthideous factor of all, because aeroplanes can be dispatched on a mission of destruction or of provocation at almost any moment and no provision need be made beforehand for them and no warning need be given. Therefore, I say that on all these grounds we are bound to realise that we are entering upon a dark and dangerous valley through which we have to march for quite a long time to come unless some blessed relief comes to us through some agreement—for which there is hardly any exertion that we should not make. My right hon. Friend asked me and asked us all not to indulge in panic. I hope we shall not indulge in panic. But I wish to say this: It is very much better sometimes to have a panic feeling beforehand and then to be quite calm when things happen than to be extremely calm before hand and to get in a panic when things happen. I must say that nothing has surprised me more than, I will not say the indifference but the coolness with which the Committee has treated the extraordinary revelation, surprising they ought to have been, of the German air strength relatively to our own country. Certainly it involves a profound alteration in the status of our country. For the first time for centuries we are not fully equipped to repel or to retaliate for—which is the only form of repulsion in this case—an invasion. That to an island people is astonishing. Panic, indeed. The position is the other way round. We are the incredulous, indifferent children of centuries of security behind the shield of the Royal Navy not being able to wake up yet to the

wonderfully transformed condition of the modern world.

I listened to the statement of my right hon. Friend and admired very much his handling of a most difficult Parliamentary occasion. We are, I say, entering upon a period of danger and of difficulty. And how do we stand in this long period of danger? There is no doubt that the Germans are possibly superior to us in the air at the present time, and it is my belief that by the end of this year, unless their rate of construction and development is arrested by some agreement, they will be possibly three and possibly even four times our strength. My right hon. Friend the Member for Caithness (Sir A. Sinclair) challenged some time ago the figures I used in the Debate in November and I thought that to-day, now that those figures are found to be correct, I should have had from him some amende honorable and that he would have welcomed the opportunity of saying that he was wrong, but I gather that my right hon. Friend preferred instead to fasten upon this other figure which I used as lately as 2nd May and challenge that, while saying nothing about his complete stultification on the previous occasion. All that I can say is that I earnestly hope that my forecast will be proved wrong, but there is nothing to prevent such a result being reached if the Germans simply continue to turn out this great machine which they have set in motion and keep it revolving. They have created, whatever it may be, a thousand, 1,500 brand new aeroplanes in a comparatively short space of time, and the plant that brought that about can produce double and treble that number with great ease during the present year. I can only hope that they will not think it necessary to deal with it to that extent.

I come to the new statement which my right hon. Friend has made to-day. The Royal Air Force is to be raised to 1,500 first-line strength. By first-line strength I mean, and I imagine the Government mean, aeroplane formed in squadrons each with another aeroplane behind it, and each squadron with 50 per cent reserve for pilots, with all the or- ganisation and everything that is necessary. I hope that that is the mind behind the picture, and, when I speak about German figures, it is the kind of picture I am endeavouring to count upon. To produce a programme of that kind is the most formidable and tremendous advance in British defence which has been taken, and the Committee should not be at all inclined to underrate the magnitude of the effort which the Government have now proposed to us. But I cannot help saying what a pity it is that we did not make this proposal two years ago, or even one year ago, because then we should have been in a position during this critical period to be making an output similar to that which is being made in other countries. I have given my warnings in the past, and I am certainly not going to repeat them for the purpose of self-glorification on this occasion, least of all would I do it when my right hon. Friend, with his engaging candour and in his usual manly fashion, has said quite openly that so far as the rapidity of German expansion was concerned, the figures placed before him were wrong and have been misleading. That is so. The confession does my right hon. Friend the greatest credit, but the consequences of what happened remain, and it is characteristic of my right hon. Friend that he remains to face those consequences with courage. I am glad that the significance of that is apparent to

the Committee.

I must say that I do not think that I could follow my right hon. Friend in the description of the difficulties of collecting and finding the information from Germany. It has always been difficult, and indeed impossible to ascertain the top limit either of what Germany had or of the rate at which she was producing or what her capacity was, or what use she meant to make of that capacity. The top limit has always been difficult to ascertain, but for the last two years a perfect stream of information has been coming to this country from France, Holland, Italy, Belgium and Switzerland, and from Germany herself. Remember, a large part of the population there are estranged in their hearts from the Government. A stream of information came which, though it did not show what the top limit would be, showed with indisputable clearness that the German effort in aviation was on an incomparably greater scale than ours. Therefore, it seems to me rather odd that, when the Committee of Imperial Defence, the one presided over for four months by the Prime Minister, were examining all these matters in the autumn of last year, they did not get hold of some of this most voluminous information which came into this country. I am very glad, by the way, to hear the Foreign Secretary say that it was not the fault of our Intelligence Service. It used to be the best in the world. In the war the foreigners certainly thought it was the best; both our friends and our foes treated it with the highest respect. No, I think really that at some time or other we ought to have a little more explanation about how it was that the facts did not reach the men at the top. We all know perfectly well that the Ministers are absolutely incapable of wilfully misleading Parliament. It would be an abominable crime to do such a thing, but evidently somewhere between the intelligence information and the ministerial chief there has been some watering down or whittling down of the facts. At any rate, at its leisure Parliament should press for further examination, and for further light to be thrown upon that matter.

I have been told that the reason for the Government not having acted before was that public opinion was not ripe for rearmament. I hope that we shall never accept such a reason as that. The Government have been in control of overwhelming majorities in both Houses of Parliament. There is no Vote they could not have proposed for the national defence which would not have been accepted with overwhelming strength, and, if the case was made out to the general satisfaction, as it is now, probably without any serious opposition of any kind. As for the country, nothing that has ever happened in this country could lead Ministers of the Crown to suppose that when a serious case of public danger is put to them they will not respond in overwhelming strength to any request. Then it is said—and I must give this explanation of this extraordinary fact—that "we were labouring for disarmament," and it would have spoiled the disarmament hopes if any overt steps to raise our Air Force had been taken. I do not admire people who are wise after the event. I would rather be impaled on the other horn of the dilemma and be called one of the "I told you so's." One ought to criticise the Government in the House chiefly upon matters which one had already indicated beforehand might become the subject of this public misfortune, and I should like to remind the

Committee that for the last three years I have endeavoured as far as I could to criticize the drift of our foreign policy, the attempt to weaken the French forces, the undue stress which was put upon disarmament, and I ventured to coin the motto, which some Members of the Committee may remember, that, "Redress of the grievances of the vanquished should precede the disarmament of the victors." That, I believe, was a very sound policy, but, at any rate, the moment it was clear that Germany was going to re-arm herself there were only two courses, one was a collective representation to her that she must not do so, and the other was concerted counter-armament among the other Powers. And that is the position which we have reached now, but only after a long delay.

The Foreign Secretary used the expression that we were going to "the edge of risk." I think it is a very dangerous thing for a Minister to boast that we are going to the edge of risk. Along the edge of this precipice the ground is often treacherous and a fierce gust of wind may sweep the unwary tight-rope walker into the abyss. See what happens when you try to walk along the edge of risk. I was very glad indeed, in view of these facts, that the Lord President, with his usual generosity, would not allow any undue blame to be thrown upon the Air Ministry. It is a new Department. It is not perhaps a very strong Department. It has not the traditions or backing of the older Services of the Crown. It has not been strong, and it was not, before the German air force was set on foot, one of the most important Departments in the country, and it would have been a very wrong thing if any undue responsibility had been cast upon it, for a state of affairs for which, as my Tight hon. Friend has boldly said, the Cabinet as a whole must take complete responsibility.

I have only one more set of observations to make to the Committee, and they are strictly relevant to the immediate proposals which the Government have put before us. When are we going to discuss these proposals in detail? Obviously, we cannot do it to-night because the Lord President was naturally vague and general in his statement, and, even if he had given the fullest details, it would have been much too soon for the Committee to attempt to give a reasoned examination of them. But we must ask ourselves: Are they adequate, and, also, within what limits are they executable? Those two questions are interdependent, because it is not merely a matter of money. If you get into trouble over unemployment insurance or anything like that, money will cure it, but money will not cure these difficulties. You want time as well as money. The question as to whether a proposal to increase the Air Force in this country is practicable or not practicable within a certain time can only be decided after a very careful study of all the details have been made.

I agree with what my right hon. Friend the Member for Caithness said, and I will retort with good for evil by commending his suggestion. I do not believe that this problem of building up the Air Force which the Government have now announced, or the greater one which they will have to build, will be solved entirely by the existing aircraft industry, nor do I believe that it would

be right to trust entirely to the individual efforts of those in the industry. The right hon. Gentleman opposite will remember that the great national shell factory which the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Carnarvon Boroughs (Mr. Lloyd George) laid down with so much foresight took 15 months to come into operation during the second year of the War. In my opinion, national factories for producing particular types of aeroplanes should play a part in the general strengthening of our Air Force. But we await the Supplementary Estimate. The test of this scheme is the money it will cost in the present year or in the next year. It is not the slightest use merely putting out orders and hoping that you will get delivery. What Parliament will want to be reassured about is that large sums of money are going to be earned by the contractors during the year for substantial quantities of material, aero-planes. You cannot judge the size of this scheme until you see what are the financial votes by which it is to be started and supported. In the early days of this year the French Govern- ment had a great overhaul of their air service, and, after very strenuous debates, they decided that drastic re-equipment was necessary. They voted 21,000,000 sterling at the present rate of exchange. I hope that we are going to learn what are the figures by which this programme, in itself a very bold and far-seeing one, is to be supported. I hope that the Supplementary Estimate will not be left until the end of the Session, but that we shall discuss it in the next few weeks. I trust that we shall have an assurance to that effect. There is one suggestion that I would make to my right hon. Friend the Lord President of the Council. He might consider whether we could have a discussion in a secret Session upon this subject. I recommended that to the right, hon. Member for Carnarvon Boroughs during the War, and he took that course. It was a great success and redounded to the advantage of His Majesty's Government. I am not suggesting that there are any deadly secrets which could be disclosed or that the Government would be asked to tell anything that they would not in the ordinary course tell us, but it would be of great advantage of we could discuss some of these technical points without our conversation being overheard by all Europe. I think that suggestion should be considered by the Government because many hon. Members would like to bring forward points but will not do so until they can be brought forward without fear that a bad impression might be created in other countries. That is apiece of friendly counsel which I offer to my right hon. Friend. Meanwhile, let me say, and I am sure it is the feeling of the whole House, that in the face of this very great programme which has been put before us, a very great and far-reaching programme of air expansion, there is no demand which the Government can make upon the House or upon the country in the present circumstances for these curing of national defence which will not be faithfully and cordially supplied.

7.35 p.m.

Dr. ADDISON The speech of the right hon. Member for Epping (Mr. Churchill), full of interesting descriptions, full, as all his utterances are, of great breadth of knowledge, might have supplied that peroration which was missing from the speech of the Lord President of the Council. The Lord President told us that he had made a peroration but had torn it up, and it became

replaced by one in which he lamented in eloquent terms that after 17 years we were still in this atmosphere; we were still confronted with the destruction of all our hopes and with this degradation of the human intellect because we had not yet invented any way of escape and avoidance from greater horrors than ever before. In a very inadequate manner that is an epitome of the right hon. Gentleman's amended peroration, the right hon. Member for Epping has adorned the tale in a masterly fashion. He has told us that two main dangers confront humanity, first that there may be a war forcedupon us a sort of result of establishing a safety valve for unemployment, and that owing to the absorption of the unemployed in war services and having reached the peak of war material production employment it might be that another war would be precipitated upon the world on that account. I am not disputing his accuracy but merely stating his argument. The other reason which he evolved in his characteristic fashion was that a State might launch and precipitate an attack upon another nation.

That is what concerns the House of Commons nearly 17 years after the completion of the War, and I suggest that if you want a condemnation of policy there it is. [HON. MEMBERS: "Whose policy?"] I am not concerned with whose policy it is. I will come to some details of that later. This situation has come about, providing that it has been accurately described, as a result of the failure of our statesmen to give effect to the pledges they made at the conclusion of the War. I am not going to take this Debate into the question of foreign policy, except in passing, because I want to deal with some of the technical service matters which lie behind the Vote; but cannot escape from the fact that this situation has arisen from the mismanagement of our foreign policy, provided that the accounts that have been furnished to us are correct, and I am not disputing them for my present purpose. The right hon. Gentleman gave us a description of the results of a sudden air attack, and I accept them as correct. Would that be guarded against by the provision of another 650 aeroplanes? True, we should be in a better position to go out and bomb somebody else and we should be more able to go and poison somebody else by scattering gas in their houses and streets, but that would not in any way protect us against the dangers of attack.

This is a defence Debate. The right hon. Gentleman gave an eloquent statement of the present case and it is up to us to look about and see if we can substitute something that will be likely to be more effective. Let me in passing refer to the Noble Lord the Member for Horsham (Earl Winterton), who pictured to us faithfully, and I am sure sincerely, what he felt to be the needs of the situation. That account was based upon the presumption that our present position was more or less defenceless. Nobody knows better than the right hon. Member for Epping that the efficiency of an arm is not purely dependent upon counting numbers. When you have produced the aeroplanes, once you get your factories going, I do know that it takes much shorter time to produce a machine than a pilot. Perhaps it will take a tenth of the time that it takes to produce a pilot. A short time ago, and I believe it still to be true, the technical services associated with the British Air Force were as good as any in the world. Therefore, our first line aeroplanes, with those immensely skilled and highly equipped personnel behind them, cannot be

said to have placed us in a position of defencelessness. We have a very highly efficient and strong force.

Earl WINTERTON As the right hon. Gentleman, referred to me, perhaps he will allow me to say that I have good reasons for stating that there are to-day in Germany 10,000 fully trained pilots. In this country there are 4,000 fully trained pilots and 2,000 semi-trained pilots. If you are going to consider personnel you must have regard to those facts.

Dr. ADDISON I cannot dispute the figures of the Noble Earl, because I do not know where he got them, and therefore I accept his statement as correct. The fact is that the Government's proposal will not provide us with an adequate defence. That is undeniable. It is equally undeniable that the horrible situation in which we find ourselves is the result, without a doubt, of mismanagement of foreign policy. I would mention a case which will be before us this week; in fact it is before us now. If the Government display the same pusillanimity in this case as they did in the case of Japan and Shanghai, we shall be presented with I do not know how many more armament Votes. I refer to the Italian dispute with Abyssinia. That is a case in which it is necessary for Great Britain to be faithful to our membership of the League of Nations. If we fail there, and the Foreign Secretary displays the same feebleness that he displayed in the case of Japan and Shanghai, heaven knows what the disastrous results may be. Not only so, but I suggest that if we fail there we shall alienate the support of every minor Power in the world. They will say: "What is the good of the League of Nations?" and they will be justified in asking that question. Our attitude in that matter will have a very intimate relation to the policy of this country in preventing another world war.

I will leave that matter and come to one or two of the technical matters which arise out of the statement of Herr Hitler and the proposals of the British Government. The Lord President said, and we all welcome it, that they propose to examine with great care and detail the suggestions made by Herr Hitler in respect of different phases of armaments, big guns, submarines, bombing aeroplanes, tanks, and so forth. We welcome that, but the results of that examination will depend upon how it is conducted. It is not the first case that we have had of the examination of technical proposals. Such an examination has been going on for nearly two years at Geneva. An artillery man, as everyone who has been behind the scenes knows, if he is any good at all, is very keen on improving his guns. If the British Government are going to remit to a committee of artillerymen the examination of the size of guns, or to another committee of experts Herr Hitler's proposal with respect to submarines, I suggest with complete confidence that we shall get nowhere. It is the business of statesmen to examine these matters and say what the policy of the country is to be.

That brings me to the method which has been pursued in presenting the present proposals. The Lord President of the Council told us that the Prime Minister and himself sat on the Committee of Imperial Defence with the Chiefs of Staff examining the

figures for several months, and considered that this examination was satisfactory co-ordination. If he is satisfied with that as a co-ordination of the method of dealing with our defence problems, he is satisfied with very little.

The SECRETARY of STATE for FOREIGN AFFAIRS (Sir John Simon) The right hon. Gentleman made an observation just now, and I am sure he would not like to create a false impression. I hope, therefore, he will bear in mind that from the very beginning the Government of this country has stood for and pressed for the abolition of the submarine and a reduction in the size of guns. It is not as the result of any new proposals that we are going to look at it for the first time; it has been the basis of all the efforts we have made.

Dr. ADDISON That makes it all the easier for the Government to approach this matter con amore. As far as big guns are concerned, the Foreign Secretary knows that the matter was remitted to a committee of artillerists, and that they sat for something like three months examining technical questions which arose as to the size of guns. He knows how futile that method of procedure has proved. At any rate, there were no effective proposals brought before the Disarmament Conference for a reduction in these weapons. How have these proposals been formulated? We have been told that the President of the Council and the Prime Minister sat with the Chiefs of Staff examining certain matters and that the Lord President is satisfied that this is an effective co-ordination of our Defence Services. We are not. If you are going to have an efficient defence system you should have one set of people responsible for the whole business. Anyone who has had to do with these matters knows the legitimate and reasonable rivalry there is between the different Services. It may be that we shall be confronted with proposals from the Admiralty for more of those gigantic ships which are little less than white elephants of the sea. Unless these matters are discussed by people who have no separate service interests but the single aim of producing a co-ordinated policy of defence, nothing is more certain than that the Services will run away in different directions, exalting this particular arm and that, and leading the country into an unco-ordinated and ill-thought-out system of defence. That was recognised by all at the end of the War, and it would have been altered by now had it not been obstructed for the last 15 years by the Services.

In regard to what the Lord President told us about the method of supply, frankly it gave me an entirely creepy feeling as to how the right hon. Gentleman was going to get these increased numbers of aeroplanes. I do not know what the expense will be. I have looked up the evidence of the Public Accounts Committee given by the Chief of the Air Service on the 29th May last year. Two questions were asked by the Chairman on the question of design: "How far does the Ministry do its own designing, and how does it assist manufacture?" The answer was: "We have nothing corresponding to the Royal Navy Corps of Constructors. The designing staff of 15 aircraft manufacturing firms are our designing staff, and we rely on that entirely." Here is a State Department which is proposing to involve this country in the expenditure of many millions of pounds on new

aeroplanes which has no designing department on which it can rely. It has to rely on the designing department of 15 different firms. If that system is to be perpetuated, whether we want 1,500 new machines or any other number, this country will be landed in a hideous waste of public money.

Lieut.-Colonel MOORE BRABAZON The right hon. Gentleman will realise that during the War machines were designed by the factory, and we got into such a terrible condition by being behind in our designs that it had to be stopped and the designing given to competitive private firms.

Dr. ADDISON I know more about the matter than the hon. and gallant Member, and I was going to tell the Committee exactly what did happen. At the end of 1916 three competitive departments were ordering aeroplanes, the Air Board doing its best but squeezed all the time by the Admiralty on the one hand and the War Office on the other. The result was hope- less confusion, and it was only when the whole thing was taken over and consolidated—I myself gave the instructions for it to be done and asked Lord Weir to report on the matter—that there was anything like co-ordination. Under the system which was then pursued, and which is now pursued, there was a hopeless multiplication of types of engines, and of planes. The first thing we did was to reduce to some proportion the numbers of types of planes and engines. Here we have a proposal which contains the most vicious elements of that system. However many aeroplanes the Government are going to manufacture, if we want to avoid unnecessary expenditure of money and have an efficient supply system it must be brought into one department, and it must have adequate powers to control costs from start to finish.

The debate, however, arises from the failure of different States, our own in-chided, to secure a collective peace system which can be relied upon. We are now examining an expedient which by the confession of those who recommend it will not give us defence. I suggest that for many years past we have been considering this matter in terms of military equipment. I contend that if the Government are to assist in the development of an effective security system it must approach the matter from other sides. I want the Government to take up the suggestion which is involved in Herr Hitler's speech, namely, the control of the supply of materials to possible belligerents. He makes that proposal himself, and not, I suppose, without reason, because anyone who is familiar with the details of munitions knowns that there are half a dozen ingredients for which Germany is dependent on supplies from the outside world. If the Powers at Geneva led by the British Government had organised an effective system of sanctions controlling supplies, apart entirely from any threat of war, Japan could never have undertaken her expedition into China, nor would Mussolini be able to pursue what are apparently his intentions in Abyssinia.

It is high time that the Government took the lead in working out in detail the other types of sanctions which could be operated

without involving the world in the risk of war. For most countries, not for all, it would be possibly effectively to prevent them going to war at all if we were to apply ourselves with courage to the working out of effective sanctions concerning material. Nothing has been done as far as I know; we have simply had vague and general talk. I am sure that the country which will be dismayed beyond words by what has happened to-day. We have a right to insist that the British Government shall give a lead in these matters instead of helplessly coming to the House of Commons, encouraging panic, and asking us to double our aeroplane forces, while at the same time professing that it will not be an effective defence. This country is in a better position in my judgment than any other country to give an effective lead in developing these other measures which would prevent war. With these desolating disappointments before us, I am sure we should have plenty of supporters in the world.

This is not the end; it is only the beginning of an armaments race. It is the surrender of hope. We refuse to be parties to it, and demand that the Government should exert themselves, as they could if they would, in exploring and developing the other methods which can effectively prevent war. I hope that in initiating and carrying through their conversations with Herr Hitler they will examine these things with a really determined intention to arrive at a solution of the difficulties and that they will not in the middle of the deliberations address lectures to the Germans telling them what bad people they are. Nothing has been more deplorable than the handling of these matters by methods which have alternated between cajolery and scolding. I hope they have finished with all that, and that, following the example of the exhortation of the Lord President of the Council, the British Government will approach the discussion of these things with Germany and the other Governments concerned with candour and a willingness to trust the other man's good faith. I believe myself that if they do even now it is not too late to bring the world back again on to the way of peace.

8.2 p.m.

Admiral of the Fleet Sir ROGER KEYES I will not try to follow the right hon. Member for Swindon (Dr. Addison) through his argument, but I would like to remind him of the Motion on the Order Paper, which is hardly conducive to good relations with Germany: "That this House is of the opinion that steps should be taken by His Majesty's Government to bring to the notice of the German Government the feelings of repugnance caused by the mass terror now prevailing in Germany, involving as it does the secret arrest and imprisonment of workers, their confinement in concentration camps, the use of torture to extract confessions, the beating and mutilation of helpless prisoners, and the semi-judicial execution of persons in the charge of the German Government further more, that His Majesty's Government should inform the German Government that this condition of affairs in Germany has an unfortunate influence upon the cordial relations which it is desirable should exist between Germany and Great Britain." I would like also to say, with reference to the co-ordination of the defensive forces, that there is an

excellent body in existence, the body of the Chiefs of Staff, and the technical part of the Government's White Paper on Defence clearly shows that there is a very close relationship and good fellowship between the three Chiefs of Staff. That Committee has been strengthened since I was at the Admiralty by the inclusion of representatives of the Foreign Office and of the Treasury. It would greatly benefit that Committee if a Minister was put in charge of it, a Minister with vision, courage and experience such as the Socialist Government. had when Lord Haldane presided over the Committee of Imperial Defence and gave up the whole of his time to it. When the Washington Conference was sitting the Committee was presided over by the right hon. Member for Epping (Mr. Churchill). That Conference evolved a treaty which has been of the greatest value for years. It practically stopped the building of battleships for 15 years, and it brought about a great deal of economy in other ways. We tried then to get rid of submarines and to keep down the size of guns, etc., but these things have to be settled with other nations, and, if other nations will not agree, there is nothing more to be said about it.

There is a pretty general agreement that the home defence air forces of this country and the ground defences against air attack will have to be very considerably increased in order to protect London and other towns and harbours which are.

in striking distance of the Continent. I hope that we shall hear to-night from the Under-Secretary of State for Air that the Naval Air Service will not be included in the home defence force of 1,500 first-line craft. It was a very great relief to me to hear the right hon. Member for Epping say what he did about naval replacement, because this country and the Navy owe him an enormous debt for the fact that our Navy at the commencement of the Great War, when war was forced on us, was ready and in an efficient state to maintain in the sea communications not only of the Empire but of our Allies throughout the world.

In the Government's White Paper on Defence they very wisely reminded the country that if the peace should be broken the Navy is, as always, the first line of defence of our essential communications. One thing is absolutely certain. If unhappily the peace should be broken a great many more people in this country will suffer from lack of sea-borne essentials, which make life possible, such as food, raw materials, fuel and lubricating oil than will suffer from bombs and poison gas, if the enemy possess ships which can cut the sea communications on which the very life of Britain depends. The protagonists of what is called the unified air service claim that the air is one, whether it be over the land or the sea, and that there is no dividing line. That is an absolute fallacy. Aircraft have to come down to their parent ships at sea, or to their land bases, and these bases are absolutely dependent for security on the Navy, Army or both. Ali fighting to obtain command of the sea is the business of the Navy whether carried out by surface craft, submarines or aircraft, and dual control can only lead tc. confusion, inefficiency and disaster in war.

The Admiralty are solely responsible, or ought to be, for the sea communications of the Empire, and they have always insisted that dual control which was forced on them was bound to hamper and handicap the efficiency of their air force. I am sorry that the Lord President of the Council is not here, because I would like to remind him that when this utterly illogical policy was, inflicted on the Admiralty we—I was a member of the Board at thetime—pointed out the difficulties of operating the Government's policy unless certain points were conceded. The most im- portant point was that the entire cost of the Fleet Air Arm should appear on the Naval Estimates in order that the Admiralty and not the Air Ministry should be responsible for the measure, quality, strength and nature of the Navy's air service. We thought that that would be a safeguard, but like other political safeguards it was futile, because all the Admiralty's efforts for years—andafter all I have been in this business for years —have been thwarted by the Air Ministry. Whenever we wanted to increase our air strength and the training of our personnel, the Air Ministry, which has many other pre-occupations, was not able to fulfil our requirements. Finally, we protested also that such a striking departure from all the principles of command and administration could only be regarded as experimental. I do not think that there can be any question that experiment has failed, and the sooner the Government relieve the Admiralty of this handicap the better for all concerned. The Air Ministry will have plenty to do to put its own house in order, and the Navy cannot afford to wait for the peace to be broken to make good the shortcomings in their air service, which are so vitally affecting the efficiency of the Navy.

The majority of the Members of this House will be astonished to hear that the Navy is not allowed to have flying boats. I hate drawing comparisons, and I avoided doing so when last I spoke in the House on this subject. But I am pleading for something which I regard as absolutely essential for the efficiency of the Navy, and I hope that the Under-Secretary of State for Air, who is not here but who, I understand, is going to answer to-night, will bear with me, because I am quite certain that my many splendid gallant friends who fly in the Air Force will not take anything that I say to-night amiss. I think that a great many agree with me. An officer who has spent his whole life since he was a boy of 18 there, in the Royal Air Force, and whose occupation since be retired recently brings him into close contact with aerial development all over the world, remarked to me only yesterday: "You know, if you were really running your own show you would have wings on your torpedo boats by now." He went on to say that the flying boats which the Admiralty handed over to the Air Ministry were the very best in the world. But the Air Ministry have neglected the development of flying boats. He told me—I happen to know it istrue—that every Navy has flying boats which are infinitely superior to those possessed by the Royal Air Force. I would like also tore mind those who do not believe in handing over the conduct of the Naval Air Service to the Navy that the Admiralty built and turned over to the Air Ministry, with a Royal Naval Air Service crew, an airship which flew to America and back 15 years ago, a feat which was not repeated for many years, not even by the Zeppelin. I will not say anything about the results of the Air Ministry's efforts to build

airships.

I believe that it is generally considered that although the German air menace is immediate the naval threat is not so urgent. Many boys and girls learn to fly in a few weeks, and there will be no dearth of splendid pilots. When freed from the cumbersome machinery which has so greatly impeded progress in design and production, we can when necessary produce vast numbers of aeroplanes at short notice. But ships and trained men cannot be produced at short notice, and while Germany has been organising her shipyards, engineering works and factories for military purposes and training her men and boys to work and to bear arms, our factories and machinery establishments have been lying idle and the capacity of our men and boys has been. deteriorating through no fault of their own but through prolonged unemployment. It will be difficult tore start building to the necessary extent owing to few apprentices having been entered in late years and the consequent shortage of trained and skilled workmen. In 1910 Mr. Balfour declared: "We exist as an Empire only on sufference, unless our Navy is supreme." That is just as true to-day. In 1914 we had a powerful fleet, immense resources for expansion, and a large fleet of old ships in reserve which proved invaluable in the War. To-day we have none of those things. With incredible folly we scrapped a number of powerful ships which for years to come would have been invaluable for the convoy of the merchant ships carrying food supplies and raw materials. By the Treaty of London, for which the Socialist Government are entirely responsible, and against Naval advice, we are limited to building small lightly armedships—unarmoured ships which can only be death traps if opposed to the ships that other nations and now Germany also are building. While we have allowed our defences to decline and have discarded an alliance which was a guarantee for peace in the East, Japan now claims naval parity with the British Empire, and she is building up an Empire in the East. Italy seems to be bent on doing the same thing in North Africa. She is building two great capital ships of 35,000 tons and a powerful modern navy in the Mediterranean. France is building four great capital ships. Those six ships are bound to be superior to our 20 years old modernised battleships.

France, unrestricted by the London Treaty, has also built a large fleet of submarines. I do not think we need have any hope that Herr Hitler's desire to do away with submarines will be accepted. We have made that proposal before and no other nations have agreed. In addition to that submarine fleet, she has been able to build a great modern flotilla leader of a most powerful type, far more formidable than anything we are allowed to build under that horrible Treaty. We know that Germany is rapidly arming. Does anyone imagine that the German rulers of to-day will not continue arming until they think they are in a position to get what they want by fighting or by the threat of war? By the Treaty of Versailles Germany was limited to a few vessels of 10,000 tons, with 11-inch guns, six light cruisers of 6,000 tons with 6-inchguns, and a dozen destroyers, and she was forbidden to build submarines. But with considerable ingenuity she has designed a type of ship known as pocket battleships. These ships have an immense range of action. They have sufficient speed to escape from all the capital ships in the

world except our three battle cruisers, and power to destroy every cruiser that exists.

The Treaty of Versailles apparently is dead. In addition to three pocket battleships, and apart from building submarines, we know now that Germany is building two 20,000 ton battle cruisers, faster than our own battle cruisers and fast enough to overhaul and destroy almost every cruiser that we possess. These powerful ships are absolutely certain to have an immense range of action and to carry reconnaissance aircraft. So when one remembers the havoc that the Emden and other German light cruisers caused to our trade in the first months of the War, and the immense damage that was inflicted by disguised armed merchant ships which escaped our blockade and ran amok on the high seas, at intervals throughout the War, it is not difficult to visualise what would happen if the great and powerful modern German ships got on to our trade routes.

In addition to that threat of these powerful marauders, we are now faced once again with a renewal of the submarine menace. The Foreign Secretary said in this House not long ago, "Who can doubt that the greatest guarantee for peace in Europe is a strong British Navy?" I heard M. Flandin, the French Prime Minister, use practically the same words in Toronto last autumn. Yet our Navy to-day is relatively weaker than it has been for 150 years. The Government have not been able to provide even enough money tore place our old obsolete ships to the extent allowed by the London Treaty. I am sure that the Committee must have remarked that the Lord President did not make any reference to the replacement of our old worn-out ships.

That is all I am asking for at present—not to build up a great Navy. But one passage in the Lord President's speech was singularly appropriate. I refer to the great fortresses which he told us had been built along the south coast 50 years ago. My right hon. Friend referred to the panic at that time, due to the fear of invasion. The money spent on those fortifications was thrown away, but fortunately the country woke up, and in 1889 the Government of the day, realising that its Navy was inadequate to protect the sea communications, passed a Defence Act. That wise provision enabled a declining Navy to become the great fleet, which kept the communications of the Empire and those of our allies throughout the War.

The first step towards the revival of our maritime security is to free the Navy from the toils that bind it, by invoking the escalator clause of the London Treaty and starting to build such ships as the Navy requires in order that we may be ready, before it is too late, to meet the perils that threaten us, so that our seamen may not have to pay with their lives for the shortsighted folly of so-called pacifists.

While other nations have been steadily arming we have been making gestures, to the despair of our friends and allies. Does anyone imagine that Germany would have challenged the world again if our Navy and our Air Force had been supreme Let me

again remind the Committee what Mr. Balfour said. “We exist as an Empire only on sufferance, unless our Navy is supreme.” The Germany of to-day is in no mood to suffer weaklings, who have not the will or the strength to protect their great possessions. The naval efficiency, the honour and the prestige of our great Empire have been as the breath of life to me for 50 years, and it has been torture to me of late to watch this country of ours drifting into perils against which it is not in a position to safeguard itself, and with regard to all our great responsibilities, relatively almost unarmed. All Governments since the War have been responsible for the deplorable situation in which we find ourselves to-day. If this Government which has done such great things for the welfare of the people, for the restoration of our trade and our financial stability, would only give a lead and act courageously, I believe that almost everyman and woman in Great Britain and Northern Ireland and indeed allover the Empire, would unite and rally to its support. In conclusion, I would remind hon. Members of a speech which was broadcast by Mr. Rudyard Kipling at the St. George's Day dinner. They will find it in the "Times" of 7th May. He drew attention to the great risks which this country is running. In 1886 when the maritime security of the Empire was in jeopardy another great author and patriot, Lord Tennyson, wrote words which I beg hon. Members to bear in mind. “The fleet of England is her all-in-all;” “Her fleet is in your hands,” “And in her fleet her Fate.”.

8.27 p.m.

Mr. C. S. TAYLOR As this is the first time I have had the honour to address this House, I venture to hope that I shall be accorded the measure of indulgence which is usually given to Members on the occasion. As a young man and the youngest Member of the House it is with certain apprehension that I face such a distinguished company to present a short and simple speech. St. Bernard of Clairvaux, over 900 years ago in an oration entitled, "Advice to young men," said “Drive out bashfulness with a sense of duty.” To-day, I find some consolation in his words. Great Britain necessarily has been alarmed during the past months by rumours of war and of nations re-arming. There is no doubt that this country desires peace, and none more than the young men whose responsibility it will be to respond to the call of their country in the event of war. We have heard that the world is re-arming, but Great. Britain is slow to make adequate provision for the protection of her citizens and her Empire. Our defence forces, in the face of European militarism are, I would venture to say, pathetic. We have heard of pacts and treaties with European nations which may have the effect of drawing this country into a war, the terrors of which are beyond our imagination. I submit that in view of the post-war actions of European nations, we owe allegiance or military assistance to no one. But, in view of our unsatisfactory defence forces, we are unable to avoid entanglements which otherwise might be unnecessary, as we ourselves are unprotected and open to attack.

The United States of America has no intention of being drawn into war. Geographical conditions favour her policy of isolation

but nevertheless her forces are adequate for the protection of her people and her trade routes. I believe that Great Britain has a great opportunity at this unsettled time to stretch a welcome hand across the ocean and express her willingness to co-operate with that other great English-speaking nation in a mutual desire for peace. And then, how could it be made possible to adopt this policy of freedom from European and international obligations which is favoured by the United States? Only by the provision of a defence force which can claim parity in every respect with that of any of our neighbours. I submit that this should and can be done and with the continued indulgence of the Committee and speaking with the greatest respect, I make bold to mention a plan by which further finance might be raised to make that desire a fait accompli. As the War Loan and Victory Bonds were offered to the public for subscription in a time of national need, so a National Defence Loan might be offered. A large sum, sufficient for the purpose, at a fixed rate of interest and repayable over a period of years, would, I feel sure, be subscribed by the general public. In this way the taxpayer would not be burdened unduly. As one of the younger generation I believe I am voicing not only the thoughts of those of my own age but also of those who saw the atrocities of the last war, in a, protest against the delay in protecting our people, our homes, our Empire and our £3,000,000,000 annual world trade. The peace of the world depends upon the strength of Britain.

8.31 p.m.

Colonel WEDGWOOD We have just listened to an absolutely perfect maiden speech. In the first place the hon. Member was heard, in the second place he talked sense and in the third place he concluded with the best sentence that has been delivered to-day. I hope we shall hear the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. C. S. Taylor) often and that he will fill the place of the late Member for Eastbourne who was also an admirable contributor to our debates. I agree with what the hon. Member has said. He has in fact taken the words out of my mouth, but I have other words to put in their place. The thought struck me as he was speaking—is it better, as in Germany, to have one speech on an occasion of this kind and to allow nobody to comment upon it or suggest any other ideas or, as in this House, to hear the Lord President of the Council first and then hold a general debate open to the public and heard by the country in which every point of view can be advanced? While we are talking here the Germans are acting, but I am not certain that that machine which the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Epping (Mr. Churchill) described as going round and round all the time, is working quite so perfectly or efficiently in the absence of any criticism as it otherwise might. There is something to be said for being in a position to put before a Government or the departments of a Government, the opinions of all sorts and conditions of men and to allow those opinions to circulate throughout a country in order to secure, if nothing else, a con- fidence in the country that all ideas put forward are being considered and digested by the responsible authorities. I think that in the long run freedom has this enormous advantage over tyranny, that we do get both better information and better confidence in the body politic.

I wish to say one or two things which it seems to me have been left out of the Debate so far. I take it that everybody in this Chamber is in favour of collective security. In increasing our Air Force we are anxious not merely to secure safety for England but to secure peace at least throughout Europe. This is not a purely selfish expenditure of money for the salvation of England, but it is for the salvation of something more even than Europe. It is for the salvation of those democratic principles on which we have grownup, and of the free nations, against the attacks of incendiary Powers. We are not protecting England alone; we are protecting something far more, and if we are to realise that we are going in now for collective security, if we are providing a weapon for the League of Nations, or for a league of peaceful nations, to use, we must realise that that involves not merely expenditure by this country in bringing its Air Force up to date, but also risks of war which we might otherwise avoid.

We are not going in for collective security, in building up our Air Force here, in protecting France and Russia and all the small countries in Europe—we are taking that risk—notsolely for the love of those countries or even for the love of peace, but for love of ourselves. Collective security is double-edged. We give security and we also secure it from other countries. If we did not want help, if we in this country were perfectly safe as we were five years ago, then one of the main arguments in favour of collective liability and collective security would vanish. It is because we are no longer safe that collective security through the League of Nations, or through an alliance of peaceful nations, has become popular in this country and inevitable as a policy, simply because the risk is universal and no longer confined to other countries than ourselves.

The Government are, in my opinion, doing the right thing in bringing the strength of the Air Force up to real parity with that of Germany. I think that is inevitable in the present circum- stances. I agree with the hon. Member who has just sat down that such a situation as we are in to-day is not to be met merely by an increase in the Air Force Vote, by an increase of certain squadrons; we have to get back to parity with Germany by other methods, by methods more parallel to those adopted during the War. I would strongly urge a loan for the building up of factories to provide aeroplanes until we get up to the state of being able to produce 20 or even30 aeroplanes a day, and it is essential, if we are to do that, that there should be national factories, not private factories. I have had a good deal to do recently with the peace ballot. The question in the peace ballot which is always jumped at and signed first is that there shall be no private manufacture of arms, but that it shall be a State monopoly. In the case of the Army and in the case of the Navy the munitions and arms are supplied by State factories, not only, but mainly. In the case of the Air Force, we have not got a State factory in the country. It is all done by private manufacturers, whose shares are booming to-day and who see before them a prospect of an enormous increase in private wealth.

If you are to carry behind you the good will and approval of the people of this country, you must have your factories State factories, so that there may be no suspicion that private interests are being benefited by the expenditure. That means State

factories not merely for the aeroplanes themselves, but for the parts as well. I do not know what the ideas of the Government are in this matter, but it seems to me that the loan of £100,000,000 which might in other circumstances have been spent on roads and housing under a Lloyd George scheme is now earmarked. Let it be earmarked not merely for the making of aeroplanes, but for the development of the latest form of mass production factories for every element that goes to building up of an air force. It is a horrible thing for a pacifist to have to advocate that, but it seems to me that it is only by building up our police force, our international, European police force, that we can prevent the risks of war.

The alternative is obvious. It is the doctrine of the "Evening Standard" or the "Daily Mail," that of washing our hands of all responsibility for what happens in Europe. If we could escape that way, there might be some point in it, but although we should not be the first to be attacked, the time would come when we should be inevitably drawn in. Step after step would be taken, first in the East, then in Austria, then in Czechoslovakia, then in Denmark, and then in Alsace-Lorraine, and sooner or later, if we do not step in with our collective security and say, "So far, and no farther," England is bound to be involved in the struggle with this almost insane militarist Power in the centre of Europe. Therefore the alternatives are really the alternatives of complete resignation to anything that might happen, to the development of these infernal autocratic institutions in Germany all over the world, or else to go in with France and Russia and all other freedom-loving nations in order to provide a force strong enough to prevent Germany from going to war. It is obvious that the German nation will never go to war unless they think they can win, and if our force is sufficient, if the police force of Europe is sufficient, we shall save ourselves and save Europe.

Therefore, I am in favour of taking this question of our deficiency in this supreme arm as one of the crises which this country has to pass. Indeed, I do not think there has been a crisis comparable to this since the close of the Great War. We must now realise the position and take heroic steps to put it right. I am certain that you can carry the country with you on this, provided you make it quite clear that the force you are raising is to be used for no Imperialist purpose whatever, that we shall not attack anyone, but that it is purely a defensive force, to be used in conjunction with other defensive forces in Europe, in order to preserve that which we all hold most dear—peace and liberty.

May I pass from that general position, which is Animated, I suppose, honestly by a love of freedom which transcends any question of place or race, and turn to another aspect of the question If we are going to build 20 or 30 planes a day, if we going to secure an Air Force really as strong in two years' time as the German force will be in two years' time, let us think how they are going to be used. To my mind, in the first place it is absolutely important that they should be fighting aeroplanes, not bombing aero- planes. I do not say that because I dislike bombing, but I am certain that bombing aeroplanes can never work, if the other side have control of the air, and the control of the air will be decided by the fighting aeroplane. In the first 24 hours

the control of the air will be won by one party or the other, and after it is won no number of bombing aeroplane will be of the slightest use. If the other side has won, their bombing aeroplanes can do their damning work, but bombing aeroplanes are helpless if they are faced with a swifter force able to destroy them. Therefore, I say that the Air Ministry should consider first and foremost how to provide the most efficient form of fighting machine, whether one-seater or two-seater.

Not a word has been said to-day on the even more important question of training the personnel. There will be a time I have no doubt, when we shall be able to turn out 20 machines a day, but can we have a plan for turning out 20 pilots a day, or even 30 or 40? What is our production of pilots? What is our training to-day? Would it supply us with the human element, daring enough to use these new machines? In the admirable propaganda books of Russia, I see picture after picture showing people jumping off aeroplanes in the air. Apparently, jumping off an aeroplane with a parachute behind you has become a sort of patriotic and popular week-end pastime in that country. I should like to know whether our people are as anxious and eager to jump off aeroplanes at 5,000 feet with only a parachute behind them. I am perfectly certain that it is no use being merely able to fly an aeroplane. What you have to do is to be absolutely competent in the air and to have the courage to fight. I have seen fighting all over the world in every arm of the Service, and I can say with confidence that by far the most dangerous and nerve-racking fighting is fighting in the air. If you are on the land or in a ship you can funk, if you are not seen, but in the air everybody sees you and knows what you are going to do. If a man funks, he may as well be not up in the air at all. What we have to ensure is that he has the knowledge how to fight and the determination. That is a question of training which had better be considered.

I do not believe that it is possible to get our position in the air satisfactory as long as it is left to the Air Department alone. That Department starts with two enormous disadvantages. In the first place, it is a new Department and it is not dug in. In the same way as the other two defence Departments are dug in. In the second place it has not the same society pull. The Air Force is spending its time to-day, not in building up the safety of this country, but in attempting to meet the arguments of the Admiralty and the War Office. The Admiralty and the War Office with their old-standing position, anxious to preserve for all time the importance and absolute necessity of their particular arm, are in a much stronger position. Consequently, there is a tendency to scamp and to detract from the importance of the air arm. What the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Epping (Mr. Churchill) said is perfectly true. There is to be no notice of the next war, and to be ready at any moment, so that every squadron leader will know beforehand what he has to do on 10 minutes' notice, will have to be the job of the Air Force. They will be in the business first. To my mind it seems perfectly certain that if after a week we lost control of the air, the Fleet and the Army would not have much to do in protecting these islands. Therefore, the Admiralty must give up the question of how we can defeat Japan in a war which will never take place, or even how we can defend Australia from America. These dangers are

so remote, so infinitesimal compared with the immediate danger in which we are to-day from attack from a Power far stronger and far more populous and, I think, now naturally better fighters than we are ourselves.

Therefore, if we are to keep sufficiently strong in the air, it must not be merely by means of the Air Force. The Navy and the Army must get into the air too. Unless they do, we shall never have the advantage of the perfect safety that we have had behind the Navy in the last 500 years. Surely, it is not impossible to do that. I will add this one argument which the Navy will appreciate, Every service depends far more than anything else upon tradition. The tradition of the Navy is a thing of which everybody in the Navy is still proud, and there must be a tradition in the Air Force too. If the Navy is going on with big battleships—big coffin ships—if it is going on with the idea of protecting convoys to Australia which we shall never want, if it is going on with the idea of protecting Singapore and sending aeroplanes that we want here to Singapore, then we shall not get any help from the Navy. We want the Navy to develop a new form of amphibious fighting, partly in the air and partly on the sea. Then we shall get a chance of increasing our defensive forces in a way that the Air Force can never do. We are wasting our time providing for imaginary dangers and protecting ourselves against possible danger in future when we have a danger immediately before us. Remember that, just as in 1914, we still had in the Army and the Navy the ideas of the time of the end of the Boer War of 1902, so we shell find ourselves in the next war with a War Office and an Admiralty thinking precisely as they used to do in 1919. Something has got to change. It is true that our Air Force may develop, but unless we change the minds of the Admiralty and of the War Office, we shall enter the next war handicapped far more than we were in 1914.

8.53 p.m.

Wing-Commander JAMES The right hon. and gallant Gentleman will forgive me if, as I intend to occupy not more than five minutes of the Committee's time, I do not refer to his speech, except to say that up to the half-way peroration I was completely in agreement with him in what he said. I want to refer to the speech of the right hon. and gallant Gentleman the Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Sir A. Sinclair). I am sorry to do so in his absence. He emphasised one point which I believe contains a widely held and dangerous error, namely, the desire for the abolition of the menace of air bombing and the urgent necessity of the Government devoting themselves to a task of eliminating this new and very terrible threat to civilisation. I yield to nobody, not even the hon. Member for Bridgeton (Mr. Maxton), in my dislike of war, and in my dread of the next war if it were fought, as it would be, mainly in the air. I entirely agree that the primary objective of civilised Powers must be to secure the total abolition of air warfare. But I equally believe that if the abolition of air warfare is made the first and not the last objective in disarmament, the cause of general disarmament will be immeasurably put back. After all, there is really to-day in the world, from Japan to Germany, only one factor which is making everybody dread war, and that is the fear of bombing. If

we remove the fear of bombing without coupling it with such limitation of all other arms as to make all aggression impossible, then I believe the cause of general disarmament will be put back many years.

I was confident that Herr Hitler would make the abolition of air warfare one of the main planks of his platform and said so to many people in the last few days, because at the present juncture nothing would suit Germany better, if her intentions are dishonourable, than to secure the most drastic obtainable limitation of the air arm. If air warfare were to be abolished it would leave the incomparable German army again the paramount force in Europe. The one thing that Germany is frightened of to-day, and rightly frightened of, like the rest of the world, is the air. I therefore sincerely hope that the Government, while making the total abolition of air warfare their ultimate objective, will not let it become the first objective, and thereby prejudice general disarmament. I entirely agree with the right hon. Member for Swindon (Dr. Addison), who said just now that an increased Air Force on our part would not be a preventive, but what it would be and will be is a great deterrent.

We were asked by the Lord President, and I am sure rightly asked, not to-day to attempt to analyse Herr Hitler's speech or to comment on it in detail, because it certainly contains the germ of some suggestions which it would be a terrible pity to regard with prejudice; but I am bound to say that I think any of us who spent four years of our lives in France dealing with the greatest military machine the world has ever seen, and those of us who look back on German history, internal and external, during the last 60 years, and who remember that four times in the memory of living men has Germany been the aggressor in Europe will require more than a very brilliant and masterly propaganda speech, admirably designed for both internal and external consumption, before we are prepared to assume that within the last fewmonths—since the 30th June of last year if you like—there has been a complete change of heart in a great people who have never, in the last 80 years, hesitated, for internal or external reasons, to resort to force the moment it suited their purpose. I hope Germany's intentions are honourable. I believe the best way to make them honourable is for us, for the time being, to face them with such collective security that dishonourable intentions would not pay.

I want to say one word on the co-ordination of our Defence Services. As so often happens, a Debate designed for one particular purpose is of necessity used for another purpose, and this Debate, after all, was designed to take place on the vote for the Committee of Imperial Defence. There are many of us who feel very strongly that the co-ordination in those defence services which we must have, is not adequate, and there was, as is reported in to-day's "Times," a very largely attended meeting of private Members upstairs last night, a very interested meeting, to discuss this particular point in the anticipation that it would be the subject of discussion to-day. I would just observe this, that those of us who have for the last few years been urging upon the Government to take further steps to develop, to bring up to date, the Committee of Imperial Defence have

always received the answer—it was given the day before yesterday in the other place—that the present Committee of Imperial Defence is ample for all requirements. But I invite the attention of hon. Members to this point, that when we were faced a week or so go with this relatively mild emergency—Isay "relatively mild" because it cannot be compared with war—the first thing the Cabinet did, and rightly did in my very humble opinion, was to appoint—I quote from the "Times"—a special small subcommittee to work with the Committee of Imperial Defence, and investigate the whole subject with particular relation, it is understood, to co-ordination. That seems rather a contradiction of the very assurances with which we have been put off for some years. Lastly may I say that the creation of this new air force which we have got to have—there is no alternative at the present time— is, as the Lord President emphasised, capable of suspension if and when circumstances warrant. Meanwhile, I am perfectly certain that the only hope for the peace of Europe is a strong Britain acting with and through the existing machinery of the League of Nations.

9.3 p.m.

Captain GUEST There are so many other Members who wish to speak that I propose, like the last speaker, to confine myself to a very few remarks and to occupy only a very few minutes. The tone of the Debate was set by, if I may so describe it, a remarkably able speech from the Lord President of the Council early in the afternoon. He has shown us the wisdom of further study of Herr Hitler's speech yesterday, and also indicated how impossible it is for us to-day to go into too great detail as to our air arm expansion. I agree with both pieces of advice. But he used two words, and I am sure he used them deliberately: One was to warn us against "panic"—and that was remarkably well answered by my right hon. Friend the Member for Epping (Mr. Churchill)—and the other, and perhaps the more important of the two, was when be observed that this is undoubtedly a state of "emergency." When those words are used in Parliament in connection with national defence, which concerns the homes of the entire population, one cannot but feel extremely serious and become extremely cautious in any words one may use. A suggestion was made by the right hon. Member for Epping that there might be advantage in holding a Session of a secret nature, as we did in the days of the War, which would enable a great many of us to ventilate our fears, because unless they are ventilated they cannot be answered. Nobody who is a supporter of the Government wishes to embarrass it, but at the same time neither do they wish to leave their minds and their souls discontented and in a state of doubt as to what the situation really is.

I entirely agree with the developments of yesterday at the Private Members' Committee, who asked the Government to consider a better form of co-ordination among the three Fighting Services, and I am glad that the Lord President of the Council went further to-day in his comment upon that question than he has ever seen his way to go before. Obviously the Government

are not satisfied with the position as it is, and they will give, as the Lord President said they were giving, attention to the work of better co-ordination. If so, we shall have done good work by our Committee upstairs.

I would pass from that to the sort of thing one might say of a Debate of this kind. Four or five times we have had what nominally could be described as a Service Debate, and on every occasion the Debate has turned into a Foreign Office Debate. That is natural, and I do not think any complaint can be made of it, but we have not had an opportunity, except upon the Estimates themselves, of dealing with the real details of some of the points which are disturbing us. Discussions upon them turned into Foreign Office Debates as well. The naval point of view was admirably put, I think unexpectedly, by the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Epping but the Army point of view has not been put to-day; yet it deserves as much position in a Debate of this nature as the Navy or the Air. The Air is the Department with which I am most concerned, and I have two or three remarks to make upon it. We might quite easily attack the Government, although not the Ministry, in four or five different ways. We might say that in speed we are badlyplaced—Iwill not say exactly how bad we are—in numbers we are badly placed against the forces of the rest of the world, in ground organization we have not very much to boast of, and in factories and in skilled artisans we are also behind. On that point I pause, because I might ask with reason from the Government for some guidance upon it.

This point touches what every speaker has said to-day about our capacity for expansion of aircraft manufacture and of other industries indirectly connected with it, to enable us to catchup—catching up is the process upon which we are now engaged—and I have figures which I could quote. I believe they are very nearly true. I believe that Germany to-day has at least 100,000 men actively engaged in the production of aircraft, and I know for certain that we have not 25,000 of our own similarly engaged in this land. That is the only comparison I would make to-day between Germany's position and our own. When we get to the bottom of that, we shall have got to the bottom. the anxiety with which we are concerned. If we could be assured, when the under-Secretary speaks, that that comparison is a great exaggeration, I should go away from this House to-night a much happier man.

I pass at once to two points which should be mentioned, but have not so far been mentioned. They cannot offend anybody and may possibly enlist support. This kind of Debate to be of any use must command universal support. The subject is a completely non-party one. There may be slightly different ways of handling it but if once the danger and the fear are realised, I have no doubt that all the parties in the State will pull together, if the word "emergency" is uttered. I submit that the reason why we are behind is that it has not been appreciated that civil activity and enterprise and civil aviation are the foundation of all military national defence. It is true of everything else. It is true of the merchant service; it is true of the Territorial movement.

Why should it not be true of aviation? It has never been grasped, so far as I have been able to make out in the years in which I have listened to our Debates, that a strong civil aviation would give you what you wanted when the danger came without having given offence to any other country surrounding you. We have been told that that cannot be done.

The right hon. Gentleman the Member for Epping told us, 12 or 13 years ago, that civil aviation must learn to fly by itself. That is like remaining a free trader in a protectionist world, as I have said previously in this House. Other countries have devoted large subsidies to the development of civil aviation, and the net result is that their industries are in a far better position than ours to turn their attention to military requirements if needed. The parsimony of £500,000 a year devoted to civil aviation shows a bad comparison with what other countries less prosperous than ours have been able to do. I will quote only one or two. America, who is so far ahead of us in her performance in civil aviation, has thought it wise to devote £25,000,000 to civil aviation spread over four or five years. Germany, the country which we are considering so closely to-night, devoted £24,000,000 to civil aviation last year, although it was not civil aviation at all, but was called that. France, whom no- body can contend is as financially well off as we are to-day, has found it possible to devote £4,000,000 to civil aviation. That is the reason why we have got left so far behind.

The last thing I would like to say is somewhat more metaphysical. I shall probably have support from the Opposition. I listened very carefully to what my right hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Colonel Wedgwood) said on the subject of profits made out of the expansion of the Air Force. Perhaps he would agree with me, because in the summer of 1915 he and I both came here from France together, and we sat on that bench together and pleaded for conscription. We had been through the first year, and had both seen the terrible sacrifice of the gallant volunteers during that first 12 months of the War. It was only after a debate in this House for one day, when Mr. Asquith went out and left us with an empty bench, that we eventually did something. I think the Derby Commission arose out of our efforts. It was not till 18 months afterwards that the country faced up to the wisdom and sanity of introducing conscription.

Times have changed. It is pointed out that the buffer time of mobilisation no longer exists. It was once thought to be safe to allow a fortnight before armies got going, but when news comes upon us of an air menace there is no time for that kind of deliberate arrangement. We must mobilise before the war, and not wait until the war begins. Mobilisation of thought is the beginning of all that. Every man and woman, rich or poor, has a part to play, and has to play it equally, for the benefit of the State. That brings me to the point of saying that all forms of profit must be eliminated and all factories for making arms must be national. May I suggest one thing which may be hard for the Opposition, until it is looked into? Not so many years ago the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Derby (Mr. J. H. Thomas) sat on a corner bench, and when I raised a plea for conscription

he said, "Hands off labour." We know what that meant. I had to prove that the munition worker was getting £6 per day and the man in the trenches only 1s. That must never happen again.

Mr. KIRKWOOD It never did happen.

Captain GUEST Nobody would deny it.

Sir JOHN WALLACE I think the hon. and gallant Member meant £6 per week.

Captain GUEST Everybody knows I meant that. We must get the same service from the man who stays at home as from the man who goes abroad. It is not to press it that I raise this point, but that is the kind of problem to which we shall have to apply our minds, if we are to have a contented nation ready to support us in a just war, and if parties are to get together so that we may have a policy on which all are agreed.

9.15 p.m.

Mr. JOHN WILMOT The Committee have listened with very great interest to the speech of the right hon. and gallant Gentleman who has just sat down. It was like a number of speeches which have been delivered during the afternoon, which, it seems to me, assumed that war is inevitable, and that the subject of discussion now is what we should do to prepare as best we can for the war which cannot be averted. I refuse to accept that situation, and I cannot believe that hon. Members who think like that have really realised what it means. I have been through one war. Fortunately, I have not lived long enough to have been through more, but one is enough, and I am sure the right hon. and gallant Gentleman will agree with me that the character of a new war will be as different from that of the last, and as different from anything that we can envisage, as the last War was different from 1066. It seems to me to be leaving reality aside to go on blandly talking about the sort of arrangements that we will make for recruiting when the next war comes.

It seems to me, if I may say so with great respect, that the awful sense of impending doom which is the reality of the situation if war is inevitable has eluded the attention of the House to-day. I think the Lord President of the Council realises it, but he seemed to be the only man in the House, except the speakers from this side, who really showed an inner grasp and meaning of the horror and futility of modern war. And yet, although I am convinced that he realises it, and hates and detests it all, what does he propose that we should do in this extremity to avoid, not merely war, but a catastrophe which will probably mean the end for ever of all that we love and hold dear? He proposes—let us look at it for what it is—to increase our 800 aeroplanes

by adding to them another 600 or 700. Are we really asked to believe that 700 aeroplanes, in the modern conditions of attack and warfare, will make the difference between peril and security? I do not believe that anyone who really faces the problem squarely can believe that peril to-day will be translated into security next week or next year by the building of 600 or 700 aeroplanes.

I believe that most Members of the House would agree, that there is no security in what has been proposed to-day, but that it is a mere gesture—a gesture designed partly to frighten the enemy and partly to bring an illusion of security at home. I feel sure, however, that the Government do not realise that the man in the street and the woman in the home understand the threat of modern war, and that this illusion of security will find no conviction with them, because they know that, whether we have 500, or 700, or 1,500 aeroplanes, the bombs will drop down and destroy them and destroy their children. I represent in the House a crowded, congested area of London by the waterside. Within its boundaries are important strategical points—power stations, factories and the like. The people who live in those streets know that, from the very beginning of a war, they will be under attack, that they and their children will be bombed and destroyed. They can imagine the hideous horrors which will overwhelm them if war comes, and they are not concerned as to whether we have 500 or 1,500 aeroplanes; they are concerned with only one thing—that that war shall not begin.

I do not believe that the party to which I belong desires peace any more than anybody else. I do not believe that we do; but we differ in what we believe to be the way to ensure it. I think it is about time, if I may say so with all respect, that the silly gibes which sometimes come from the other side of the House about Labour Members exploiting the cause of peace for party purposes were stopped. I submit that, if I believe, as a Member of the House of Commons, that, however much the Government may desire peace, what they are doing will not preserve peace, it is my duty to say so. For no other purpose am I sent to this place, and I think it would be the duty of any other Member who thought the Government were mistaken in their policy to say so. I believe that the Government are mistaken to-day. I believe that what they have done they have done with good intentions, but that what they are doing will avail us nothing; that, so far from increasing our safety and security and improving our defence, they have left us exactly where we were before; and that they have thrown away an opportunity of securing something of value. Only time will prove whether the speech that was made in Berlin really provides an opportunity to get down to business in arriving at some settlement of this menace, but at any rate, in face of the serious position in which we find ourselves, and in face of the peril in which we stand, nothing should be left untried. Although it is true that the Lord President said that the Government would examine every suggestion which has come from Berlin, I feel that there would have been more chance of getting something done about it had the rest of the Government's policy been somewhat different.

What could have been done? We have heard from the hon. and gallant Member for North Portsmouth (Sir R. Keyes), with his unrivalled knowledge of naval matters, from the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Epping (Mr. Churchill), and from other Service Members of the House, that in their opinion, in order that we may have the very minimum of security, not only the Air Force but the Army and the Navy need to be immensely strengthened and improved. I gathered that was so from the speech of the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Epping, and I gathered from the speech of the hon. and gallant Member for Portsmouth that in his view the present organisation of our air defence was so inefficient and so unsuitable that for certain of its purposes it was almost valueless.

Sir R. KEYES I did not say anything of the sort. I only suggested that it would be better for the efficiency of the Navy if they were allowed to control their own air force.

Mr. WILMOT I listened with great attention to the hon. and gallant Member, and I respectfully suggest that if he will read the OFFICIAL REPORT in the morning he will be surprised at the strength of the strictures which he passed on the Air Ministry and all their works, so far as they affect the naval air arm. I think the lay Members of this House were entitled to gather the impression that in his view the present control of the air arm of the Navy by the Air Ministry was highly unsuitable and highly unsatisfactory, and that something ought to be done about it, and done pretty soon.

Sir R. KEYES I quite agree.

Mr. WILMOT I am very glad that at last I have interpreted the hon. and gallant Member correctly. That means that in order to secure the very minimum chance of safety, we have to spend vast sums of money upon increased defence services. Some Members talk of starving our defences, but it must not be forgotten that we are spending now, and have been spending during these last four or five years, more money on our defence services than we have ever spent before—more money than we have spent in the whole history of our country in peace time, despite the fact that we are 20 years after a war which was fought for the purpose of bringing war to an end. This starvation policy certainly costs us a tremendous amount of money. But is it not obvious that, however much we spend, we cannot buy security? No nation can buy security, because we have got to aposition by the inversion of science for destructive purposes that there is no effective defence to aerial attack.

What could the Government do other than what they have done? It seems to me that there is another course, and a course which would, on balance, offer a very much higher chance of getting some safety and some security. In my view, when that speech was made in Berlin last night, they should have put it to the test and said "We are prepared to give the German

Government the opportunity to carry out the undertakings and the indications of a desire for some mutual settlement of this problem, and we are prepared to do it with the utmost despatch." The threat to European security is not felt in this country alone. It is felt in France, in Holland, in Bel- gium, in the Scandinavian countries, in Russia, all over the world, and here was an opportunity for cutting through the technical entanglements, which seem to throttle the life out of every attempt to get European agreement, and for the Government to have said "We take Hitler at his word. We take the initiative now. We summon a new peace conference to meet at once, and for a limited time, in order that we may discover whether together we cannot end this great menace to all our lives and futures. During that time, a limited time, we are prepared, as a gesture of our good faith and intention, to suspend any increase in our defences, and we call upon all other parties to this new peace conference to effect the same standstill undertaking." Here was a chance of focussing the conscience of the world in a new atmosphere upon this very real and immediate menace, and it may well have been that out of some such gesture as that the world would at last have awakened not only to the peril but to the crass and incredible folly of every nation and group of nations threatening the life out of every one of its neighbours.

There is no sense in it. There is no reason in it. If someone from some other planet could have been present in the Gallery to-day and have heard us, intelligent people, talking about this problem, they would have believed that they had come to a world where there was no sanity at all. If the Government had done this, they would have had the whole-hearted support of every man and woman in the country. They would have taken the moral leadership of the world. They would have sacrificed nothing, and they would have risked nothing, but they would have had within their reach the greatest prize that can be conferred upon humanity to-day. But no. They talk the same old stuff about careful consideration, fair and impartial examination. All the vista of complications and delays rise up before one. The reference to experts and sub-committees; the interminable sittings and reportings and the travellingabout—onesees the whole miserable apparatus of international conferences repeated again. That they say, but what they do is to announce that there will be another 500 aeroplanes. Those 500 aeroplanes mean nothing at all. They do not mean security; they do not mean effective defence; they do not delay the outbreak of war by one week and they do not save the threat to the life of one man, woman or child. The menace is there now, just as it was yesterday, and last Monday.

The country ought to note that this Government, faced with the greatest menace and the most serious situation that has arisen since the War, has done nothing but talk. [HON. MEMBERS Nonsense !"] It is easy to say "Nonsense." [An HON. MEMBER "And to talk nonsense."] It is easy to talk, and it is talk that the Government have done. Is there any man who believes that these new squadrons are going to make the difference between peril and safety? Is there anybody who believes that these new squadrons are really going to affect the nature of European rearmament? Is there anyone who believes, to put it

at its very lowest, that these new squadrons will not immediately be duplicated on the Continent, will not be matched by counter-armaments? We see in them mere defence. We believe—I believe—that it is absurd for anyone to imagine that the British nation has any thought, or suggestion of thought, of aggression. I believe that. Why do I believe it? First of all, because it appears to me to be so true, but I believe it in my heart because I am an Englishman, because I love Englishmen, love England and believe the English people to be the finest people in the world. But then I am an Englishman. Germans do not think like that, and Frenchmen do not think like that—not about us. Foreigners, unfortunately, do not take us at our own valuation, and, with their suspicious minds maybe, or different outlooks, they see in our armament a, menace to their security just as we see in their armaments a menace to our security.

It would be very nice if we could persuade ourselves that we have only got to say that we have no aggressive intent and the whole world will join in the chorus which we hear almost every week that a strong British Navy and a strong British Air Force are the best guarantee of everybody's safety all over the world. If we could only persuade people that that was true, how simple the world would become. We should have at least an international police force merely by strengthening the British defence forces. But, in fact, we know that, just as we in our White Paper measure the size of our Navy against the size of the navy of the United States, and just as we measure our Army against Continental armies and our Air Force against Continental air forces, in every other nation, the same measuring stick is used.

Mr. KENNETH LINDSAY What is your measure.

Mr. WILMOT If the hon. Member will possess himself for a little while and cease these interruptions which merely delay me, I will tell him. Does the hon. Member deny that in preparing their defence estimates Continental countries have the habit of using our Estimates as one of the standards with which they measure their own? We know it to be the fact, and we as certainly know that an increase in any department of British armaments is used as an excuse for further increases in Continental and foreign armaments.

The policy of the Government, as I have said, should have been to seize this opportunity on their own initiative to set in motion anew peace conference, collectively to consider this situation. Suppose it were found that these appearances of a way out and a road to an agreement were illusory, what then should we do? And now perhaps I may answer the hon. Member. Every nation threatened by this German menace should meet it in concert and together, not as individuals each building up a separate force, each half suspicious and half trustful, half believing in, and half scoffing at, a system of collective security, but as a pooled defence force, pooled in reality as the Allied armies were pooled during the War, with a common command and a common

operation. The hon. Member thinks that it is impossible, but if war were declared that is, in fact, what would happen. I suggest that the only way in which this menace can be met is for the peace-loving nations, those who are committed to the Covenant of the League of Nations and all that it means, collectively and together, under common and unified command and control, to build up a collective force so overwhelming in its strength that no bandit nation would dare to break through.

9.40 p.m.

Mr. MAXTON I rise at this late hour to make a very brief intervention in this important debate. I would gladly have been called at an earlier stage, but I know that there is always very heavy pressure on the attention of the Chair at each point. I was particularly anxious to say a word after I heard the suggestion of the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Epping (Mr. Churchill), subsequently supported by another very responsible and distinguished Member of this House, that we should have a, secret session of Parliament to discuss this matter. I hope that the House will never for one minute listen to such a suggestion. The Cabinet meets in secret. There are any number of opportunities for groups of members to meet in secret, and any number of ways by which groups of Members may convey their secret conclusions to the secret meetings of the Cabinet. But for the House of Commons to discuss in secret issues that involve the lives of the whole of the population is to throw away the Parliamentary institution. I hope and believe that the general sense of this House will be all against any such suggestion, not merely for the sake of our own people, but for the sake of the peoples of the world, who are also interested to know what the British House of Commons thinks on these important issues.

I want simply to put a view that has not yet been put. I hoped that it might have been put from above the Gangway. I listened to the speeches of the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Swindon (Dr. Addison), the right hon. and gallant Gentleman the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Colonel Wedgwood) and the hon. Member for East Fulham (Mr. Wilmot), and I do not know whether I am to have the opportunity of listening to the speech of the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition, but I should be glad to hear from one or other of them who was voicing the views of the Labour party. There is a gap as big as that between night and day between the views that were expressed by the right hon. and gallant Gentleman the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme, who made the best speech from the warmongering point of view that has been made to-day, and the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition, who holds an extreme pacifist view.

Mr. WILMOT The hon. Gentleman should remember that the right hon. and gallant Gentleman the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Colonel Wedgwood) is not a Member of the Labour party.

Mr. MAXTON I was not aware of the fact.

Mr. WILMOT That is the fact.

Mr. MAXTON The hon. Member credited me with a greater interest in their internal affairs than I possess. The hon. Member for West Bermondsey (Dr. Salter) interrupts. I am certain of one thing, that the right hon. and gallant Gentleman the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme was not speaking for him, and I question whether any of the other hon. and right hon. Members who have spoken to-day were speaking for him either. I want to put this point. My hon. Friends and I spent a certain portion of yesterday meeting a deputation of coloured seamen from different parts of the British Empire. One man was from British Guiana, another from British Somaliland and others from other parts of the British Empire—black men. They were all born in the British Empire. Most of them, and those, for whom they were speaking, served in the late war. They had become resident in this country and were sailors working in British ships. Each one of them had been denied British nationality, and had been presented with an alien card. Yet you are asking me and you are asking this House to support rearmament to defend the liberties and rights of the peoples of the British Empire. Here are working men of the British Empire denied, after having taken part in the last war, the elementary rights of a citizen, denied the right to be known in the world as sons of the British Empire.

I would refer to another point which has been interesting me in the last few days. It is the question of an unemployed man in Scotland who went on a hunger march. Many hon. Members will have heard me asking questions on the subject. Here is an unemployed man who, according to the atmosphere of today's Debate, is a member of the British Empire. He went on hunger march, 17 years after the last war. He was a, Territorial and he was kicked out of the Territorial Army ignominously for having asserted his right as an unemployed man to agitate against his treatment, and the hon. Member who represents the War Office in this House refuses to that man the right of appeal.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY to the WAR OFFICE (Mr. Douglas Hacking) The last answer that I gave to the hon. Member was that he could have the right of appeal, although he was not entitled to it.

Mr. MAXTON The right hon. Gentleman is going further than he did on the previous occasion. He said that he would permit him to make representations as an act of grace and not as a right. The point that I am making is that this is not one nation but two nations, as it was in Disraeli's time. The speeches that have been made to-day were not speeches calling for the defence of these coloured men. The defence they need is not against Hitler but against the British Government. The speeches made to-day for the defence of the British Empire were not for the defence of that unemployed man who was kicked out of the Territorial

Army. The defence which has been called for to-day is for the defence of rights and privileges, the defence of power, the defence of capitalist power. I can remember in the early days of the last War recruiting posters showing beautiful cottages: "Homes fit for heroes." We are fighting upstairs just now on a Scottish Housing Bill to prevent overcrowding. In 1914 you showed the pictures of happy homes, and 20 years afterwards we are still fighting to prevent overcrowding.

I rose under a very severe restriction in regard to time and I do not want in any way to break faith or to inconvenience the Committee. The point that I want to make is that when the working-classes were taken into the last War they went into it believing that it was going to establish world peace, that it was to be the last war. They went in believing that it was going to remove their social grievances. They believed that it was going to be the beginning of the establishment of a new world order. Their social grievances are still there, as deep and as sore as they were in 1914. The menace of war is still there. The idea of international harmony is further away to-day than it was then. Coldly and calmly we discuss preparations a war in the air. I sometimes wish for the purpose of Debate in this House that my antagonism to war was not so complete and extreme. I do not merely hate war, but I hate the fatuity and futility of it more than war itself, and I sometimes wish that I could look at it in a detached way, because I do feel the complete ineptitude of this House in discussing a matter of this sort. The House seems to place the intelligence that it normally shows on other issues entirely on one side.

Nobody has asked to-day what is the bill. The right hon. Member for Epping (Mr. Churchill) made reference to the hope that the Supplementary Estimate would soon come along. What is the bill? What is this to cost? At the present time it is the air. The gallant Admiral who represents North Portsmouth (Sir R. Keyes) put in a claim for the Navy. A claim for the Army and a higher mechanised Army will come along. When you come along to-day with the declaration that you are deserting the search for peace along political grounds and that you are looking for peace by the method of armaments, it is right and proper that the House of Commons and the country should know what the bill is that they are being asked to foot. That question has not been asked by one person to-day. Is it to be a blank cheque? No one has asked a single question as to how the men are to be taken into the Air Force. Somebody asked whether we could get the young men to fly. You can get pilots on the Clyde by the hundreds and thousands. Every young fellow that I know between the ages of 15 and 20 would like to be able to fly, but there is not one in 10,000 who has ever been up in an aeroplane because flying in aeroplanes in civil time is a luxury for the rich. I am sorry, but I must conclude before I have finished my speech.

9.53 p.m.

Sir STAFFORD CRIPPS I did not expect to be called upon to-night, but, unfortunately, my right hon. Friend the Leader of

the Opposition, who was going to reply, has been suddenly called away to an urgent case of illness in his family. I apologise to the Chair and the House for addressing them on a matter of this importance without having had a proper opportunity of preparing myself for it. There is no doubt that this is a, vitally important Debate. The decision which in effect the Committee will take to-night is one which is terribly serious. We may well be, whichever way we decide, signing not only our own death warrant but the death warrants of hundreds of thousands of citizens in this country. The great tragedy is that we cannot experimentally try one or other method of approach to see which is the safest. We are therefore bound to put forward as best we can the view which we hold as being that which is most likely to conduce to the safety and future of this country.

The Lord President of the Council said that there should be no panic. I profoundly agree with that remark and I trust that no one is going to try and raise a panic in the country in the coming months for any other purpose. But it is a little difficult to convince the people that there is no need of panic when the Lord President of the Council says that he considers we are in a state of national emergency. I do not take the view, nor do hon. Members on these benches, that it is right to look upon the present situation as one in which war is inevitable. We do not admit the bankruptcy of the human race. The moment we approach a solution of our problems from the point of view of the inevitability of war, we accept the bankruptcy of human reason; and that we refuse to do. It is only too tragically true that there has been created in Europe a frankenstein monster out of the Treaty of Versailles and the subsequent behaviour of many of the Powers. For years and years members of our party have warned the people of this country of the results which would inevitably flow from the policy being followed by the great Powers of Europe. Lip service has been given to the idea of internationalism and collective action, but time after time every suggestion to carry that into effect has been turned down, with the result that there is no greater sign to-day of the implementation of that policy than there was immediately after the War, indeed, perhaps there is less sign to-day.

We must remember that defence is something which is unfortunately a necessity to-day. It is not something which is necessarily and inherently a feature of civilisation. It arises through injustices, either real or imaginary. Certain people are ready to take up an aggressive attitude, and when we approach the problem of defence the primary matter we must consider is the removal of the state of affairs which produces an inducement to aggression. Obviously, the most effective way of dealing with the defence problem is the removal of aggression; then defence becomes unnecessary. If we are compelled to consider the problem of defence in a world in which we still contemplate the possibility of aggression, clearly we must decide upon it in accordance with the foreign policy we, as a country, adopt.

The Lord President said that the Committee of Imperial Defence had made its recommendations on the basis of a report by the Foreign Office on foreign policy, showing how closely linked together are the twin problems of foreign policy and defence. If

one is approaching the question of the provision of air armaments, it is vital to know, first, who it is you are to defend yourself against, and, secondly, who is likely to, or who will in fact, be with you in that defence. After the Lord President's speech we still do not know upon what policy the Government are relying in their policy of defence. Let me ask the right hon. Gentleman a specific question, which I think he is bound to answer as one of the most vital import to this Committee in making up its mind. Does the Government calculate upon the assistance of the French air force and other air forces in the event of attack by Germany in the air? Will the right hon. Gentleman give an answer to that question; it is absolutely vital and fundamental to the problem we are discussing.

Mr. BALDWIN It is an essential feature in the form of collective security which we are trying to negotiate in the air pact with the Locarno Powers.

Sir S. CRIPPS I am much indebted to the right hon. Gentleman for that statement. He says that he is contemplating this if we are attacked by Germany. Let me make it clear to the Committee that it has not been suggested by anybody that there is any other Power we need fear except Germany; the whole Debate has been concentrated on the danger from Germany, and no other quarter. Now we are assured that in the event of an attack by Germany we may rely, under a collective security agreement, upon the support of France and other Powers. Are we or are we not The right hon. Gentleman will tell me if I am misrepresenting him.

Mr. BALDWIN What I said was that it is to be the essence of an arrangement in the air pact we hope to form among the Locarno Powers. The air pact is for mutual security and is not necessarily against any one Power.

Sir S. CRIPPS I agree that it is for mutual security, but do not let the Committee forget that we are to-night debating upon one basis alone, and that is the danger created in Europe by Germany. Not a soul has suggested that any fresh circumstances have arisen as regards France, Italy or Belgium or Holland, which causes us to take this sudden and extraordinary action in almost doubling our Air Force at very short notice indeed. Therefore, if our foreign policy is to rely upon collective security against the aggression of Germany the whole basis which the right lion. Gentleman put forward goes, because he was merely putting forward a basis in which we alone had to defend this country against German aggression. The argument on the basis of parity is one which only applies if you are comparing the forces of this country with the forces of the country which is likely to be the aggressor. [An HON. MEMBER: "Certainly not."] I beg to differ. The whole basis of collective security is that you have in the collective grouping a bringing together of forces which altogether will be able to deal with the aggressor. If we are to be associated with the Russian and French air forces, does any one suggest that these three air forces combined will not be

sufficiently strong, at their present strength, to defeat Germany if there should be an attack, without an increase of 600aeroplanes in the British Air Force?

The argument which the right hon. Gentleman has put forward is an argument which attempts to rely on two perfectly different basic propositions. First of all, he is really relying on what is quite a logical attitude, which any one can understand and which many hon. Members take, that as we can place no reliance upon a collective security agreement we must ourselves be strong enough to deal with any enemy. That is a per- fectly logical point of view. On the other hand, there is another quite distinct and different point of view which is the one we put forward, that we have not got to rely merely on our own forces but on collective security, which makes us part of a group which will always be opposed to the aggressor whoever he may be, and the calculation of the force that is to be required in those two circumstances must obviously be different. If you are prepared to rely, as the Lord President suggested in one part of his speech, upon collective security and you demand the right to create an air force because of collective security—which is the argument he puts forward—then he has got to show that it is necessary in any grouping which may eventuate out of collective security for us to increase now and immediately our Air Force by 600 aeroplanes. He has never attempted to bring forward an argument on that basis a tall, because he knows quite well that no such argument can possibly be brought forward. It is only if you abandon collective security and you match our Air Force as an individual air force against those of other countries that you can bring forward an argument to justify the parity which he now demands. That is why we to-day refuse to support the Government in this phenomenal extension of the Air Force, because we believe that you must rely on collective security if there is ever to be a chance of avoiding a fresh cataclysm in Europe.

But it is not only that argument which the right hon. Gentleman is mistaken about. This is put forward as a measure of defence. The right hon. Gentleman in that very remarkable speech of two and a-half years ago told us that he had been advised by all the experts that there was no way of defending this country against air attack. This is not a solution of the defence problem that the Government is putting forward. It is, we believe, merely an exaggeration of the dangers of the defence problem. We are not, in fact, going to be any nearer the abolition or the avoidance of those tragic dangers to which the right hon. Gentleman referred in his closing sentences when we have voted this untold sum of money, this blank cheque which nobody is ever concerned to question, and when we have enlarged our Air Force. This is not, in our submission, a realistic approach to the defence problem. It may be that in the old days with the old arms you could match one against another and there by with a big navy, for instance, prevent another navy penetrating into your home waters. But you cannot do that with an air force. The new arm is not capable of being defended against in the same way as the old arm was, and the truth is what the right hon. Gentleman said in November, 1932, that the only means of reaching safety is when we can abolish aerial warfare altogether. I think at the same time that the first stage of this effort at abolition may have to be limitation.

This evening the right hon. Gentleman tells us that in order to get a chance of getting limitation we must have parity. We are going to build 600 aeroplanes in order that by the time we have built them we may get an opportunity of scrapping them, in association with other countries. Surely the bankruptcy of statesmen is not quite so great as that. Does the right hon. Gentleman really suggest that the statesmen of France and Germany are so stupid that they will agree to limitation when we have reached parity but that now they will not agree to limitation and that we are to be put to the trouble of building 600 aeroplanes in order to satisfy a conception of parity and thereby be able to start limitation? That really is too much for anyone to believe. If there is a willingness to limit, as Herr Hitler says in his speech, the moment to limit is just as good now as when we have built these extra 600 aeroplanes; in fact, the ordinary man would have thought that it is much better to do it now than when we have built 600 more aeroplanes. So surely the Committee are not going to take that as being an argument in favour of reaching this figure of parity with the German force that it is anticipated will be created to match the French force.

In the last two or three moments of the time which I have I should like to say one word about the occasion chosen for the announcement of this great increase in the Air Force. This state of affairs of a growing air force in Germany has been known to everybody for many months past. At no period during the whole of that time has there been a more hopeful moment that something might be done than to-day. The right hon. Gentleman says he is prepared to take the German Chancellor at his word. There are only two possibilities. You must either take him at his word or say it is only bluff; and, if you say it is only bluff the best thing to do is to call it, or so people who play poker tell me. The right hon. Gentleman, instead of calling the bluff, is going to sit down and look at his own hand to see whether he really thinks it is better or not. If, as he says, he accepts the statement of Herr Hitler, surely there could not be a more foolish or inopportune moment for making this decision to increase the Air Force. If Herr Hitler is true then this is the golden moment, according to the right hon. Gentleman, for which the Government have been waiting—the opportunity to do all these things to which they give lip service, all these things necessary for collective security. Here is the opportunity.

Why does not the right hon. Gentleman withdraw all this and go out to-morrow and call the German Chancellor's bluff, if it is bluff, and, if it is not, take the advantage of his willingness to do at least the things he says he will do? I am quite sure that the French Government would accept as well, and if this country, France and Germany accept them—[Interruption]. Hon. Members laugh but I do not think they are entitled to laugh. Let them go to the French Government with the German offer, and our own offer as well. Then it will be time enough for them to laugh, if they want to laugh, when it is refused. This is an opportunity and an opportunity which in our view it is criminal to miss. We believe that this may be one of the last chances to avoid what everybody in this Committee agrees will be the greatest tragedy that could fall upon Europe. While that chance exists, while our Government still says that it is in favour of a real collective security arrangement, on the basis of limited or

diminished armaments, when a great country which has been standing out against it offers for the first time, to a considerable extent at least, to come in on it, surely that is the opportunity to drop this proposal and to go all out to try to achieve that measure of limitation which at least would create a psychological condition of Europe in which there might be far more hope of approaching the funda- mental economic problems which lie at the root of our dangers to-day.

10.16 p.m.

Sir P. SASSOON The last thing in the world that I desire is to be drawn into an argument with the hon. and learned Gentleman who has just spoken. I feel that as he is so much cleverer than I am, he would get the better of it. It does seem to me, however, that we have been carrying out his policy during the last year or two. And where has it led us 'd It has led us to the realisation that it is a delusion to suppose that unilateral disarmament leads to agreed limitation. We have gone into unilateral disarmament, and no one has followed our ex- ample. The result is that we are weaker than we were, and weaker in our ability to persuade other people to agree with us. It seems to me also that if we are in favour of the collective system we should be in a position to do what my Noble Friend suggested, to put in our just quota to this collective security. If we are to reap the benefit we should be prepared to pay our contribution.

The Committee listened with pleasure and with interest, earlier in the Debate, to the maiden speech of the hon. Member for Cambridge University (Mr. Pickthorn). He spoke with all his experience of the War, and we know that he faced dangers of many kinds. I think that one of the most interesting things he said was, "Let us face up to the full to the dangers that confront us, but do not let us lose our heads while we dc it." My Noble Friend the Member for Horsham (Earl Winterton) said at the beginning of his speech that the hon. Member bad won his stripes. I must say that when he had finished with me I. thought he had got something of his own back. He referred to the speech that I made during the Estimates Debate, and rightly quoted me as having said that I believed that at that moment we still had a superiority over the Germans; but I did add that I considered all my figures must he conjectural, that during the next few days the Foreign Secretary would go to Berlin and have meetings with Herr Hitler, and I presumed that, after that visit, some of the veil of secrecy would be lifted, and we would know more clearly where we stood. Exactly what I said would happen did happen.

The Foreign Secretary went to Berlin and Herr Hitler told him, among other things, that his goal, as far as air matters were concerned, was parity with the French air force. The Lord President of the Council said that he believed Herr Hitler's statement, and I am sure there is no reason for not believing it. It is on that supposition that we are acting, and it is on that supposition that we base the programme which we are presenting to-day. My right hon. Friend the Member for Epping (Mr.

Churchill), whom I am sorry not to see in his place, asked me several questions which I will answer later on when he returns. Speaking as a purely Departmental and junior Minister, it was, if I may say so in connection with his speech, a considerable relief to me that I got off rather lightly, because, during the greater part of his speech my right hon. Friend was wearing his bearskin and sailor hat and it was only towards the end of it that he put on his flying cap.

I think the House will wish me to elaborate the outline which the Lord President of the Council gave of our new programme. The Lord President said that the Government had decided that our immediate objective should be the creation of a first-line metropolitan force of 1,500 by 31st March, 1937. The question was asked, What did this1,500 represent—were they really first-line aircraft, with reserves behind them and their full organisation, organised insquadrons? They are, and that figure does not include, of course, our overseas units. It excludes also that portion of the Fleet Air Arm which may happen to be situated in home waters. I may, in passing, draw attention to the fact that, although our overseas commitments are in many ways a liability under which other nations do not labour, anyhow to the same extent, in other ways we have the compensation that they are more a source of strength than of weakness to us. For instance, our training, technical and other establishments of the second line, which, of course, are planned to cater for our overseas units as well as for our metropolitan forces, are all, with one exception, which is in Egypt, situated in this country. Thus we have technical and training resources at our disposal on a far greater scale than we would have if they had only to serve those units stationed in this country. Moreover, a proportion at least of these reserves for our overseas units will always be held at home.

The Lord President referred to the scale of the task which we were undertaking and perhaps the Committee would like a few illustrative figures. Of course, our plans are still fluid, but we estimate that we shall require during the next two years at least 22,500 additional personnel of which 2,500 will be pilots, and this year alone we shall be entering over 1,200 pilots. We shall be retaining the services of some hundreds of officers and men who would otherwise be taking their discharge and returning to civil life. It will involve, insofar as some permanent officers are concerned, retirement at higher age limits and extension of service for short service and medium service officers. The re-engagement of airmen, as to which something has been said already, will ensure the availability of an adequate number of personnel of appropriate experience who will be able to fill the higher non-commissioned ranks in the expanded force. We shall be requiring a great many more recruiting depots, and hon. Members will be able to give invaluable assistance to the Air Ministry when our detailed requirements are made public, if they can interest their constituents in helping to supply our needs, which, I submit, are national rather than departmental.

Mr. MARTIN On a long-term basis?

Sir P. SASSOON It depends on what engagements they take up. Turning to technical equipment, the Government do not consider that is in the public interest to give the precise details of the additional aircraft and engines that we shall be ordering. The Committee will realise that foreign countries do not give us this information, and there are very serious disadvantages in its being made public. Our demands upon industry will be very heavy, and we have every reason to believe that the manufacturers will rise to the occasion. This will require very special attention, because it involves not only the problem of the immediate output which we need for the next two years, but also the wider problem, on which a great deal of preliminary work has already been done, as to the measures to be taken to ensure that industry can expand on a sufficiently big scale in the event, which we certainly all hope will not happen, of a serious national emergency. Here let me say that we fully appreciate the organisation of the German aircraft and engine industry. We fully realise that it is to be reckoned with very seriously, and steps to put our own industry on a firmer basis are to be taken without delay. Therefore, I am sure the Committee will have been glad to hear the Lord President say that my Noble Friend hopes to secure the invaluable assistance of Lord Weir, whose experience of these particular problems, and especially of an expanding aircraft industry is unrivalled.

It was suggested in the course of the Debate that if a large number of aircraft and engines are to be ordered, there will be a great risk of profiteering. Members will have heard in the Lord President's speech that this possibility has not been overlooked. We shall take every measure we can to prevent it. [An HON. MEMBER: "What?"] It is difficult to say exactly what measures, but it is a matter that will have to be looked into very carefully, and it will have the very closest scrutiny as to how orders are placed and with whom. There will be the closest liaison with the Treasury and business advisers.

Dr. ADDISON Will the right hon. Gentleman say whether they propose to make theseestablishments controlled establishments in any sense?

Sir P. SASSOON I am afraid I cannot say anything more than I have said, except that we are fully alive to the possibility of profiteering and are determined to prevent it by every means in our power. I hope that hon. Members will accept my assurance in that connection. It was also suggested in the Debate that Government factories should be set up. At the moment we believe that the existing firms, expanded to meet the increased output, can fulfil the requirements of the Air Ministry for this programme, and until we find that the industry might not be able to do it, there seems to be very little point in setting up Government factories, which were not successful during the War, in competition with the very efficient factories already existing. This would involve all sorts of difficulties, not the least of which would be the withdrawal of key men, who are very difficult to get from firms. As the result of that, there would be dislocation and disorganisation at the very moment when we want the almost efficiency. Moreover, it seems to me that it is easier to expand the existing organisation than to set up a new

organisation under totally different control. The Noble Lord the Member for Horsham (Earl Winterton) said that; we were always saying that everything is being examined; but this question really being examined, not only so far as the aircraft industries are concerned, but also as affecting the related trades.

I am not saying any more on the problem of technical equipment at the moment, but will devote myself to some of the many questions that were put in the course of the Debate. If the production of aircraft and engines is one thing, the training and the provision of personnel is another. We have decided to create five new Royal Air Force training schools in addition to the five that we already have, and to proceed still further with a scheme that was outlined in my Noble Friend's memorandum accompanying the Estimates whereby the civilian industry is used for the training of pilots. lion. Members who are interested in air matters will know that for many years past we have utilised civilian training schools for training our reserve pilots who are recruited direct from civilian life. We had decided some time ago to increase the number to 10 and to use them for the training of our short service officers as well as for reserve officers. We are now going with the least possible delay to increase the existing number of four training schools to between 12 and 15. The House will appreciate that this background of civilian organisation, over and above the training facilities that the service possesses, will be an immense addition to the national air resources of this country, and also, I am glad to say, will be of Assistance to the civilian industry.

Having regard to the importance of keeping our measures fluid for the moment, I will rot give any details as to the precise basis upon which this first-line metropolitan force of 1,500 will be organised as squadrons. I will content myself by saying that we propose during 1935 and 1936 to create about 71 new squadrons instead of 22 under the exist- ing expansion programme. As well as these units, we shall probably increase the existing establishment of certain types of squadrons. Of course, Although the bulk of the additions to the air strength will be regular squadrons, we propose to create at least three auxiliary squadrons. We estimate that we shall want At least 31 new stations of one sort or another, in addition to the 18 already required under the existing scheme. The cost will necessarily be formidable, but I cannot at this moment give any details about that. Although the cost will be formidable we shall have the satisfaction of knowing that we are bringing a great deal of additional employment to the engineering and building trades. We shall certainly have to have a substantial Supplementary Estimate during this present Session, as well as an additional Supplementary Vote A for the large number of new personnel.

Mr. CHURCHILL When?

Sir P. SASSOON I cannot at the moment say when, but we shall certainly have it in this Session. There are a great many things which have to be considered. There are negotiations, and orders have to be given, and we shall only bring in the

Supplementary Estimate when we want the money; hut as soon as we know when we are likely to do so I will let my right hon. Friend and the House know.

Mr. CHURCHILL In June or July?

Sir P. SASSOON I cannot say. I do not really know. I turn now to some points raised during the Debate, and especially some raised by my hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Thanet (Captain Balfour) in his very interesting speech. In particular, I turn to a point which I know interests many Members, which is the time that elapses between the issue of the specifications to the industry and the passing of the machines into service. I will also refer to the Virginia heavy bomber. As regards the time that elapses between the issue of the specifications and the passing of the machines into service, I can tell hon. Members who have made adverse comments upon it that they are pushing an open door. The Air Ministry entirely agree that the system which has prevailed in the past is not in accordance with the needs of to-day and I stressed that point and the need of speeding up the process in my Estimate speech in March. Last November we asked the leading representatives of the aircraft industry to come to the Air Ministry for a full and frank discussion of the whole question. The situation was made plain to them, and we told them that we had come to the conclusion that the time taken in the development of aircraft must be drastically curtailed. The Society of British Aircraft Constructors were asked to let the Air Ministry have a statement of their view son the best method of tackling the problem and individual manufacturers were also invite in January to give their views on this matter. Valuable suggestions were made and as a result a new system has been evolved and provisionally accepted. The aim of the revised procedure is to shorten by rather more than half the present periods for getting new types into production. The new system will have its drawback, and in particular it will necessarily involve types being ordered in quantity which may, if we are unlucky, not be wholly satisfactory initially owing to the curtailment of Service trials. But exceptional cases apart, none of the essential stages will be omitted if some of them are to be greatly curtailed and telescoped. But this is a time when risks must be taken, not of safety, of course, in order to speed up the development which the Air Council decided last year must be secured.

Another important feature of the scheme is to place on individual constructors a far greater responsibility than they have had before for design and to give them with that responsibility much greater freedom of official control. The actual specifications will be very much shortened and simplified, and generally the industry will be given very great liberty of action. In order to lose no time we have, in practice, already been applying the revised procedure, in its main outlines, for some months past by agreement with individual manufacturers.

Now I turn for a moment to the question of the Virginia heavy bomber, about which there has been so much discussion. I

suggest that it has been a little misleading to lay so much emphasis on two squadrons out of 93. The Air Ministry agree that this type of machine is completely out of date and in my Estimates speech I said that it had already been decided that the two remaining squadrons should be equipped with other types immediately. Some of the machines which will be taken from those two squadrons this year will be used for one of our new units as a temporary measure, but that will only be for a very short time until later types are available.

There were very good reasons for the delay in pressing forward in the last two years the design of the heavy bomber. The delay was caused by the fact that proposals were put forward at Geneva for limiting the maximum unladen weight of aircraft to three tons, and while there was a possibility of that proposal being accepted it was clearly inadvisable for the British Government to lay down anew type of heavy bomber. Last summer, when the hope of disarmament did not look so good and when the international situation took a definite turn for the worse, the Air Ministry decided they could delay no longer, and they decided to press forward with a new design for heavy bomber. The result is that we are now producing a type of heavy bomber which, when all relevant factors are taken into account, we consider to be an advance on any bombers used by foreign services.

I am happy to say that the situation is satisfactory in regard to other types. Our latest types of light bombers and fighters, to take the really important classes, now in service, compare very favourably with the corresponding types of any nation in the world. Our fighters, for instance, now in production, with which eight of our new squadrons will be equipped this year, have a speed certainly a good deal in excess of the German fighters to-day and we have other fighters already equal in performance to those of any other country. In the next few weeks we expect delivery of yet newer types of fighter which will show a remarkable advance on the performance of any other fighters in use anywhere. I assure hon. Members that there will be a minimum of delay in getting these new types of fighter into service.

Let me now say a word about the equipment of the German air force. It is true that in this connection Germany has had a temporary advantage, as her Air Minister claimed the other day that all, or virtually all, their military equipment had been produced in the last two years. I do not in any way wish to minimise that, but it requires some explanation. It does not mean that it has all been designed in the past two years: We have reason to believe that there are at least two types of aircraft in service in Germany to-day that were designed in 1929 and 1930, some five or six years ago. Nor, in a few years of rapid technical development, is it likely that the equipment of the German air force, alone of all the air farces in the world, has been able to escape those teething troubles with which we and others are so painfully familiar.

There is another point with which, perhaps, I should deal before Is it down, and that is in connection with civil pilots. Here again I do not think the situation is too unsatisfactory in this country. During the past 10 years, 6,000 pilots have taken out "A" licences in this country, and, of these,5,000 have taken out "A." licences in the last five years. There are more than 3,000 "A" licences in this country to-day, and that figure does not include glider pilots. We are taking steps—and my right hon. Friend the Member for Drake (Captain Guest) has been very helpful in thismatter—to see what we can do to reduce the number of these pilots who, for one reason or another, allow their licences to lapse. As far as light aeroplane clubs are concerned, the number is being more than doubled as compared with 12 months ago, and we expect to get from them a membership of 5,000; while even the pilots I have just mentioned, whose licences have lapsed, are very useful in the sense that it is easy for a pilot, once has has qualified, to requalify. I think, therefore, that in this connection, although there is a great deal of room for progress, the situation is not too unsatisfactory.

Before I close, I should like to echo the plea which the Lord President made in the course of his speech that the House should give its assistance to the Air Ministry and to the Royal Air Force in the great task that lies before them. I do not ask for immunity from criticism, for criticism is salutary for a Government Department, but I would ask that with that criticism some encouragement might be mingled, so that the Royal Air Force, from its most senior officers down to its latest joined aircraft hand, can face the grave task that lies before it and the arduous labours of the coming years with the same spirit of cheerfulness and high endeavour which has always characterised our youngest Service from its inception. In conclusion, I would say that I hope the House is satisfied, after this Debate anyhow, that the Government and the Air Ministry are fully alive to the gravity of the situation, and are determined to face it with all the means in their power. I feel sure that we shall have the country behind us in all the steps which we propose to take, and have, already begun to take; for at this juncture and in these circumstances, until we can get that limitation which we all so ardently desire, and for which I may truthfully say we have so patiently worked, I am convinced that a strong British air force is the best guarantee for the peace of Europe.

10.49 p.m.

Mr. AMERY I do not rise to continue the Debate, but only to address a question to my right hon. Friend the Lord President of the Council. This afternoon we have debated very important and interesting matters, but we have not been able to debate a matter of the first importance, for which primarily this occasion was given—I mean the co-ordination of the Services. This is a matter in which a great many Members of the House are keenly interested, on which, I believe, many Members wished to speak to-day, and on which the Lord President of the Council himself invited the opinions of the Committee in order that the Government might consider them carefully and sympathetically. We are, as the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Epping

(Mr. Churchill) said, entering upon a period of grave anxiety and stress. It is vital that in that period we should be able to secure the fullest value from the effective co-ordination and organisation of all our forces. I do not propose to continue the case for that, but only to make an appeal to my right hon. Friend to consider the real importance and value to the House, and possibly even to the Government that an opportunity should be found for discussing that matter.

Question put, "That a sum, not exceeding £193,306, be granted for the said Service.".

The Committee divided: Ayes, 52; Noes, 340.

Division No. 210.] AYES. [10.51 p.m.

Adams, D. M. (Poplar, South)	Graham, D. M. (Lanark, Hamilton)	Mainwaring, William Henry
Addison, Rt. Hon. Dr. Christopher	Greenwood, fit. Hon. Arthur	Maxton, James
Attlee, Clement Richard	Grentell, David Reel (Glamorgan)	Milner, Major James
Banfield, John William	Griffiths, George A. (Yorks, W. Riding)	Nathan, Major H. L
Batey, Joseph	Griffiths, T. (Monmouth. Pontypool)	Parkinson, John Allen
Bevan, Aneurin (Ebbw Vale)	Groves, Thomas E	Salter, Dr. Alfred
Brown, C. W. E. (Notts., Mansfield)	Hell, George H. (Merthyr Tydvil)	Smith, Tom (Normanton)
Buchanan, George	Jenkins, Sir William	Strauss, G. R. (Lambeth, North)
Cleary, J. J.	Jones, Morgan (Caerphilly)	Thorne, William James
Cove, William G	Kirkwood, David	Tinker, John Joseph
Cripps, Sir Stafford	Lawson, John James	West, F. R.
Daggar, George	Leonard, William	Williams, David (Swansea, East)
Davies, David L. (Pontypridd)	Logan, David Gilbert	Williams, Edward John (Ogmore)
Davies, Rhys John (Westhoughton)	Lunn, William	Williams, Dr. John H. (Llanelly)
Davies, Stephen Owen	Macdonald, Gordon (Ince)	Williams, Thomas (York, Don Valley)
Dobbie, William	McEntee, Valentine L.	Wilmot, John
Edwards, Charles	McGovern, John	
Gardner, Benjamin Walter	Maclean, Nell (Glasgow, Govan)	TELLERS FOR THE AYES.—
		Mr. John and Mr. Paling.

NOES.

Acland-Troyte, Lieut. -Colonel	Colfox, Major William Philip	Hamilton, Sir George (Ilford)
Agnew, Lieut.-Com. P. G.	Colman, N. C. D.	Hamilton, Sir R. W. (Orkney & Zetl'nd)
Allen, Lt. -Col. J. Sandeman (B'k'nh'd)	Colville, Lieut.-Colonel J.	Hanbury, Cecil
Amery, Rt. Hon. Leopold C. M. S.	Conant, R. J. E.	Hanley, Dennis A.

Anstruther, Gray, W. J.
Apsley, Lord
Aske, Sir Robert William
Assheton, Ralph
Astor, Maj. Hn. John J. (Kent, Dover)
Astor, Viscountess (Plymouth, Sutton)
Bailey, Eric Allred George
Baillie, St Adrian W. M.
Baldwin, Rt. Hon. Stanley
Baldwin, Webb, Colonel J.
Balfour, Capt. Harold (I. of Thanet)
Balniel, Lord
Barclay-Harvey, C. M.
Barton, Capt. Basil Kelsey
Bateman, A. L.
Beauchamp, Sir Brograve Campbell
Beaumont, Hon. R. E. B. (Portsm'th. C.)
Belt, Sir Alfred L.
Bernays, Robert
Bevan, Stuart James (Holborn)
Bird, Sir Robert B. (Wolverh'pton W.)
Bossom, A. C.
Boulton, W. W
Bower, Commander Robert Tatton
Bowyer, Capt. Sir George E. W.
Boyce, H. Leslie
Bracken, Brendan
Braithwaite, J. G. (Hillsborough)
Brass, Captain sir William
Briscoe, Capt. Richard George
Broadbent, Colonel John
Brocklebank, C. E. R.
Brown, Col. D. C. (N'th'l'd., Hexham)
Brown, Brig.-Gen. H. C. (Berks., Newb'y)
Browne, Captain A. C.
Cooper, A. Duff
Courtauld, Major John Sewell
Courthope, Colonel Sir George L.
Craddock, Sir Reginald Henry
Craven-Ellis, William
Croft, Brigadier-General Sir H
Crooke, J. Smedley
Crookshank, Col. C. de Windt (Bootle)
Croom-Johnson, R. P.
Cross, R. H
Crossley, A. C
Cruddas, Lieut.-Colonel Bernard
Culverwell, Cyril Tom
Davidson, Rt. Hon. J. C. C.
Davison, Sir William Henry
Dawson, Sir Philip
Denville, Alfred
Dickie, John P.
Doran, Edward
Drewe, Cedric
Duckworth, George A. V.
Duggan, Hubert John
Dunglass, Lord
Eastwood, John Francis
Ellis, Sir R. Geoffrey
Elmley, Viscount
Emmott, Charles E. G. C.
Emrys-Evans, P. V.
Essenhigh, Reginald Clare
Evans, Capt. Arthur (Cardiff, S.)
Evans, Capt. Ernest (Welsh Univ.)
Evans, R. T. (Carmarthen)
Everard, W. Lindsay
Fermoy, Lord
Fox, Sir Gifford
Hannon, Patrick Joseph Henry
Hartington, Marquess of
Hartland, George A.
Harvey, George (Lambeth, Kenningt's)
Harvey, Major S. E. (Devon, Totnes)
Haslam, Henry (Horncastle)
Heilgers, Captain F. F. A
Heneage, Lieut.-Colonel Arthur P.
Herbert, Major J. A. (Monmouth)
Herbert, Capt. S. (Abbey Division)
Hills, Major Rt. Hon. John Waller
Hoare, Lt.-Col. Rt. Hon. Sir S. J. G
Holdsworth, Herbert
Hope, Capt. Hon. A. O. J. (Aston)
Horobin, Ian M.
Horsbrugh, Florence
Howard, Tom Forrest
Howitt, Dr. Alfred B.
Hudson, Robert Spear (Southport)
Hume, Sir George Hopwood
Hunter, Dr. Joseph (Dumfries)
Hunter, Capt. M. J. (Brigg)
Hunter-Weston, Lt. -Gen. Sir Aylmer
Hurst, Sir Gerald B.
Inskip, Rt. Hon. Sir Thomas W. H.
Iveagh, Countess of
James, Wing. -Com. A. W. H.
Janner, Barnett
Jennings, Roland
Joel, Dudley J. Barnato
Johnstone, Harcourt (S. Shields)
Jones, Sir G. W. H. (Stoke New'gton)
Jones, Henry Haydn (Merioneth)
Jones, Lewis (Swansea, West)
Kerr, Lieut.-Col. Charles (Montrose)

Buchan-Hepburn, P. G. T.	Fraser, Captain Sir Ian	Kerr, Hamilton W.
Bullock, Captain Malcolm	Fremantle, Sir Francis	Keyes, Admiral Sir Roger
Burghley, Lord	Ganzoni, Sir John	Knox, sir Alfred
Burnett, John George	Gibson, Charles Granville	Lamb, Sir Joseph Quinton
Burton, Colonel Henry Walter	Gillett, Sir George Masterman	Law, Sir Alfred
Butler, Richard Austen	Gilmour, Lt.-Col. Rt. Hon. Sir John	Leckie, J. A
Butt, Sir Alfred	Glossop, C. W. H.	Leech, Dr. J. W.
Cadogan, Hon. Edward	Glyn, Major Sir Ralph G. C.	Leighton, Major B. E. P.
Caine, G. R. Hall	Goff, Sir Park	Levy, Thomas
Campbell, Sir Edward Taswell (Brmly)	Goldie, Noel B.	Lindsay, Kenneth (Kilmarnock)
Campbell, Vice-Admiral G. (Burnley)	Goodman, Colonel Albert W.	Lindsay, Noel Ker
Caporn, Arthur Cecil	Graham, Sir F. Fergus (C'mb'ri'd. N.)	Lister, Rt. Hon. Sir Philip Cunliffe.
Castlersagh, Viscount	Granville, Edgar	Little, Graham-, Sir Ernest
Cayzer, Sir Charles (Chester, City)	Gravel, Marjorie	Lleweilln, Major John J.
Cazalet, Thelma (Islington, E.)	Gretton, Colonel Rt. Hon. John	Llewellyn-Jones, Frederick
Cazalet, Capt. V. A. (Chippenham)	Griffith, F. Kingsley (Middlesbro', W.)	Lloyd, Geoffrey
Chamberlain. Rt. Hon. Sir J. A. (Birm., W)	Grigg, Sir Edward	Locker-Lampion, Rt. Hn. G. (Wd. Gr'n)
Churchill, Rt. Hon. Winston Spencer	Grimston, R. V.	Locker-Lampson, Com. O. (H'ndsw'th)
Clarke, Frank	Guest, Capt. Rt. Hon. F. E.	Loftus, Pierce C.
Clarry, Reginald George	Guinness. Thomas L. E. B.	Lovat-Fraser, James Alexander
Clayton, Sir Christopher	Gunston, Captain D. W.	Lumley, Captain Lawrence R.
Cobb, Sir Cyril	Hacking, Rt. Hon. Douglas H.	Lyons, Abraham Montagu
Cochrane, Commander Hon. A. D.	Hales, Harold K.	Mabane, William
MacAndrew, Lieut. -Col. C. G. (Partick)	Petherick, M	Somerville, D. G. (Willesden, East)
MacAndrew, Major J. O. (Ayr)	Peto, Sir Basil E. (Devon, Barnstaple)	Soper, Richard
McCorquodale, M. S.	Pickering, Ernest H	Sotheron-Estcourt, Captain T. E.
Macdonald, Sir Murdoch (Inverness)	Pickthorn, K. W. M.	Southby, Commander Archibald R. J.
Macdonald, Capt. P. D. (I. of W.)	Pike, Cecil F.	Spears, Brigadier-General Edward L.
McEwen, Captain J. H. F.	Powell, Lieut. -Col. Evelyn G. H.	Spencer, Captain Richard A.
McKie, John Hamilton	Power, Sir John Cecil	Spender-Clay, Bt. Hon. Herbert H.
Maclay, Hon. Joseph Paton	Pownall, Sir Asshaton	Spens, William Patrick
McLean, Major Sir Alan	Purbrick, R.	Stanley, Rt. Hon. Lord (Fylde)
Macmillan, Maurice Harold	Radford, E. A.	Stanley, Hon. O. F. G. (Westmorland)
Macpherson, Rt. Hon. Sir Ian	Raikes, Henry V. A. M.	Stevenson, James
Macquisten, Frederick Alexander	Ramsay, Capt. A. H. M. (Midlothian)	Stewart, J. Henderson (Fife, E.)

Magnay, Thomas
Maitland, Adam
Makins, Brigadier-General Ernest
Manningham-Buller, Lt. -Col. Sir M.
Margesson, Capt. Rt. Hon. H. D. H.
Marsden, Commander Arthur
Martin, Thomas B.
Mason, David M. (Edinburgh, E.)
Mason, Col. Glyn K. (Croydon, N.)
Mayhew, Lieut. Colonel John
Meller, Sir Richard James (Mitcham)
Mellor, Sir J. S. P.
Mills, Sir Frederick (Leyton, E.)
Mills, Major J. D. (New Forest)
Mitchell, Harold P. (Br'tf'd & Chisw'k)
Mitchell, Sir W. Lane (Streatham)
Molson, A. Hugh Eisdale
Monsell, Rt. Hon. Sir B. Eyres
Moore, Lt.-Col. Thomas C. R. (Ayr)
Moore-Brabazon, Lieut. -Col. J. T. C.
Moreing, Adrian C
Morris, John Patrick (Salford, N.)
Morris-Jones, Dr. J. H. (Denbigh)
Morrison, G. A. (Scottish Univer'ties)
Morrison, William Shepherd
Muirhead, Lieut.-Colonel A. J.
Nail, Sir Joseph
Nicholson, Godfrey (Morpeth)
Norie-Miller, Francis
North, Edward T
O'Connor, Terence James
O'Donovan. Dr. William James
O'Neill, Rt. Hon. Sir Hugh
Ormiston, Thomas
Ormsby-Gore, Rt. Hon. William G. A.
Ramsay, T. B. W. (Western isles)
Rankin, Robert
Rea, Walter Russell
Reed, Arthur C. (Exeter)
Reid, Capt. A. Cunningham.
Reid, David D. (County Down)
Rhys, Hon. Charles Arthur U.
Rickards, George William
Roberts, Sir Samuel (Ecclesall)
Robinson, John Roland
Ropner, Colonel L.
Ross, Ronald D.
Ross Taylor, Walter (Woodbridge)
Rothschild, James A. de
Ruggles-Brise, Colonel Sir Edward
Runge, Norah Cecil
Russell, Alexander West (Tynemouth)
Russell, Hamer Field (Sheffield, B'tside)
Russell, R. J. (Eddisbury)
Rutherford, Sir John Hugo (Liverp'l)
Salmon, Sir Isidore
Salt, Edward W.
Samuel, Rt. Hon. Sir H. (Darwen)
Samuel, M. R. A. (W'ds'wth, Putney)
Sanderson, Sir Frank Barnard
Sandys, Duncan
Sassoon, Rt. Hon. Sir Philip A. G. D.
Savery, Servington
Selley, Harry R
Shaw, Helen B. (Lanark, Bothwell)
Shaw, Captain William T. (Forfar)
Shepperson, Sir Ernest W.
Shute, Colonel Sir John
Simmonds, Oliver Edwin
Simon, Rt. Hon. Sir John
Stones. James
Storey, Samuel
Strauss, Edward A.
Strickland, Captain W. F.
Stuart, Lord C. Crichton.
Sueter, Roar. Admiral sir Murray F.
Sugden, Sir Wilfrid Hart
Summersby, Charles H.
Tate, Mavis Constance
Taylor, C. S. (Eastbourne)
Taylor, Vice-Admiral E. A. (P'dd'gl'n, S.)
Thomas, James P. L. (Hereford)
Todd, A. L. S. (Kingswinford)
Tryon, Rt. Hon. George Clement
Tufnell. Lieut. -Commander R. L.
Turton, Robert Hugh
Wallace, Captain 0. E. (Hornsey)
Wallace, Sir John (Dunfermline)
Ward, Irene Mary Bewick (Wallsend)
ward, Sarah Adelaide (Cannock)
Wardlaw-Milne, Sir John S.
Watt, Major George Steven H.
Wedderburn. Henry James Scrymgeour.
Whiteside, Borras Noel H.
Williams, Charles (Devon, Torquay)
Williams, Herbert G. (Croydon, S.)
Wills, Wilfrid D.
windsor-Clive, Lieut.-Colonel George.
Winterton, Rt. Hon. Earl
Wise, Alfred R.
Wood, Rt. Hon. Sir H. Kingsley
Wood, Sir Murdoch McKenzie (Banff)
Worthington, Dr. John V.
Wragg, Herbert
Young, Rt. Hon. Sir Hilton (S'v'oaks)

Orr Ewing, I. L.	Sinclair, Maj. Rt. Hn. Sir A. (C'thnss)	Young, Ernest J. (Middlesbrough, E.)
Patrick, Colin M.	Smiles, Lieut. -Col. Sir Walter D.	
Peake, Osbert	Smith, Bracewell (Dulwich)	TELLERS FOR THE NOES.—
Pearson, William G.	Smith, Sir J. Walker (Barrow-in-F.)	Sir Walter Womersley and Major George Davies
Penny, Sir George	Smith, Louis W. (Sheffield, Hallam)	
Peters, Dr. Sidney John	Smithers, Sir Waldron	

Original Question again proposed.

It being after Eleven of the Clock and objection being taken to further Proceeding, The CHAIRMAN left the Chair to make his Report to the House.

Committee report Progress; to sit again To-morrow.

The remaining Orders were read, and postponed.